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THE REVELATION OF THE SON OF GOD

SOME QUESTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS
ARISING OUT OF A STUDY OF SECOND
CENTURY CHRISTIANITY

BEING THE HULSEAN LECTURES FOR 1910-1911

BY

ERNEST ARTHUR EDGHILL, B.D.

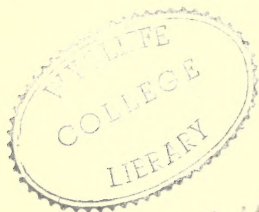
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MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1911

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GLASGOW : PRINTED AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS
BY ROBERT MACLEHOSE AND CO. LTD.

TO
L. W. C.

PREFACE

THESE lectures are here printed as they were originally written, not as they were actually delivered. The lecturer may choose his own subject, but the length of the lecture is mercifully conditioned by other considerations than the interest of the subject or the inclination of the preacher.

The first half of the first lecture to some extent goes over ground which I have treated more fully elsewhere, but it seemed necessary to set the subject in its context, if any proper comparison were to be made between the Christian religion in the second century and the other philosophies and faiths of that period; and without some such comparison of distinctive features, no satisfactory conclusions could have been drawn.

In these questions and considerations arising out of the study of second century Christianity, it is as impossible to claim originality as it is to specify one's obligations. It is a joy to labour in a field of such rich and varied interest: it is an honour to gather even the gleanings of former fellow-labourers, the praise of whose learning, ability and zeal are in all the churches. There is one, however, to whom it is a special pleasure to acknowledge a very particular debt of gratitude. To the Rev. L. W. Comper, of

St. Saviour's College, in Southwark, these lectures owe very much in the way of kindly criticism and wise suggestion. But the lecturer owes yet far more by way of inspiration and encouragement to the friendship of one whose faith is the stronger for facing facts, and whose Christian teaching is manfully true to modern thought. To him, as to a teacher and fellow-disciple, I gratefully dedicate this book.

The lectures were delivered under the title of "Firm Foundations," a fact which will explain a number of references. This title, however, could not be used, as it was found to be already appropriated, and another has been chosen which links together the main thoughts of the first lecture and the fourth. May the Son of God ever reveal Himself more fully to our hearts, and to all who feel the imperious needs of this straining age.

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I

REASON, RELIGION, AND REVELATION

SOME QUESTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS ARISING OUT
OF THE STUDY OF SECOND CENTURY CHRISTIANITY

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I

REASON, RELIGION, AND REVELATION

“No man hath seen God at any time : the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.”

JOHN i. 18.

FEW words are needed to indicate the interest and importance of the period with which these lectures are to deal.

In the days when Christ walked among men, we know that many who were weary and heavy laden wended their way to the fountain of living waters, and drank deep of that refreshing stream. And for some few years the waters flowed forth in fulness and we see the desert bursting into bloom. Then follows a time of strange silence, when the waters seek a hidden passage beneath the earth. At the end of the second century, we see them once again. The fountain flows with a fuller stream and the stately ship of the Church Catholic sails toward ocean. Along the way of that broad and ancient river the Church has crossed the centuries. And now the river widens, and flows through a mighty city, and the banks are fair with trees. But are we sure that the city is the City of God, and that the

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trees are of His planting for the healing of the nations?

A doubt still more perplexing and peremptory has come upon our age. Uncertain of the city, and untrustful of the trees, we wonder also concerning the waters whether they do indeed issue from the Throne of God. May not the Church be spreading her sails to speed forward on a false voyage? May not the original fountain have run itself dry in the desert? And may not men's desires have built the boat to carry them along another stream, in indiscriminating gladness committing themselves to anything which bore resemblance to the waters on which their fathers walked in faith, and which may bear them also on strong arms to the eternal sea.

It concerns us vitally to know whether the stream along which we are borne can be traced back to the source which satisfied the souls of men at the well of life. In other words, is the religion of the Catholic Church, emerging into unmistakable clearness at the end of the second century, essentially the same as, or essentially different from, that life of faith when the first disciples looked to Jesus their Master upon earth and afterwards looked for Jesus their deliverer from heaven? Was there in these silent years of expansion and growth any such violent discontinuity, any such profound deterioration as is sometimes supposed? Or may we say of the Church's life during this strange and secret period that it was hidden—yet hid with Christ in God?

In these lectures I propose to deal with some questions and considerations arising out of such a study, and the first lecture will be devoted to

showing how Christianity, after some hundred years of growth, challenged the attention of the world not as a philosophy or even as a theology—that came later—but as a religion embodying a revelation.

It took some time for Christians to be classed among atheists and anarchists.¹ The charge of atheism against a new religion has always proved a popular and successful means of rallying men to the defence of discredited deities, just as the cry of anarchism will rouse all the conservative elements of a country to contend strenuously for venerable and effete institutions. Those who have been most forward with the charge of atheism have often convicted themselves of much confusion of thought, and not infrequently paid an unconscious tribute to the religious character of that to which the very name of religion was, in their opinion, wholly inapplicable. Meletus accused Socrates of introducing strange gods, but declared with immediate inconsistency that what he meant was to accuse Socrates of believing in no gods at all, “as if one were to say, Socrates is charged with not believing in gods, but believing in gods—surely the saying of a jester.”²

Atheism was, in fact, a convenient charge to fling at any unpopular teacher or novel religion. It served in ancient days the purpose which is now so admirably fulfilled by a suggestion of heresy.

¹ Just. *Apol.* i. 6, 13, ii. 3; cf. *Dial.* 17, 108; Suet. *Dom.* xii. 2; Arist. 15; Athenag. *Leg.* 4; Tert. *Apol.* 10; Mart. Polyc. 8; *Ep. Lugd. et Viennæ* apud Eus. *H.E.* v.

² Plato, *Apol.* 14.

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Notwithstanding, there was perhaps in Christian worship that which made the charge natural if not inevitable. "A funereal religion, and lugubrious rites, with a tomb for an altar and an undertaker for a priest."¹ Such was the popular estimate of the Church's worship. And even this was too optimistic. We know with what astonishment the Romans viewed the imageless shrine of the Jewish sanctuary; yet the Jews, despite this peculiarity, had a sacrificial system—open and regular.² Christians apparently had no priests; and as for sacrifice, they had none unless those stories of human food were too terribly true.³ It is therefore possible that Justin's philosopher-opponent was not merely repeating or relying on popular prejudice, but was speaking in all sincerity when he publicly denounced the Christians as the enemies of all reverence and religion.⁴

On the other hand, to accuse a suspected sect of atheism is a favourite and frequent device for declining to surrender traditional beliefs of a lower religious standard to a new religion of higher power and ideal. Atheism was a common cry against philosophy, but the continued reappearance of the same popular charge against Christianity does not prove that the new faith was identified with a novel *philosophy*. On the contrary it was recognised to be a *religion*. The case is curiously enough the exact reverse of

¹ Tert. *Scorp.* 7.

² Till the final overthrow made it no longer possible in practice.

³ *Apol.* i. 26, cf. Epistle of the churches of Lyons and Vienne apud Eus. *H.E.* v. 1.

⁴ *Apol.* ii. 3.

that which happened to Socrates. In the latter instance the accusers, charging him with the introduction of strange gods, set out to prove that he believed in no gods at all.¹ In the case of Christianity, disciples were denounced as guilty of atheism, but condemned as introducing strange divinities.² It was not that they worshipped no gods, but that they worshipped new gods which was the real grievance against Christians. The charge of atheism against a man, converted to Christianity, meant not the adoption of a philosophy, but a change of religion.

The Romans who deign to mention Christianity are quite clear that they are dealing with a faith, not a philosophy. One and all stigmatize this strange movement not as a false system, but as a foolish superstition. It is, in the first instance, a matter of religion, not of reason; and just because it is a religious question the Roman writers only notice it to declare it beneath their notice. It is a pernicious superstition, says Tacitus;³ it is a superstition new and mischievous, echoes Suetonius;⁴ Pliny is of the same opinion. The new faith is a perverse and extravagant superstition.⁵ And Octavius in *Minucius Felix* expresses the same thought—a superstition vain and frantic.⁶ The idea of a rationalized religion or of a religious rationalism seemed to the ancients a contradiction in terms, and thus religion with

¹ Plato, *Apol.* 14: Σωκράτης διαφθείρει τοὺς νεωτέρους, θεοὺς διδάσκων . . . ταῦτα λέγω ὡς τὸ παράπαν οὐ νομίζεις θεοὺς.

² Acts viii. 16: "Strange gods, because he preached Jesus and the resurrection."

³ Tac. *Ann.* xv. 44.

⁴ Suet. *Nero*, 16.

⁵ Pliny, *Ep.* 97.

⁶ *Min. Fel.* 9.

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unanimous, if unconscious, scorn came to be identified with superstition. To the Romans a religion of emotions or enthusiasms was utterly abhorrent. The Roman ceremonial was frigid and formal; the State gods, stupid and severe. Rome duly paid official vows upon cold altars, but could not be persuaded to believe that faith is a consuming fire. Amid a host of official observances, the soul sought, and sought in vain, for spiritual satisfaction. Such strength as the Roman religion possessed sprang from a far different source. The religious imagination, failing altogether to invest the state world of gods with any romance or attractive charm, saw and seized its opportunity in peopling the whole world of men and women with multitudes of subordinate divinities. No one had the least desire to scale the snowy summits of official Olympus, when each field and farm, each shop and street, each hearth and home swarmed with divine patrons and protectors. These godlets might be fair and friendly, and the sense of their kindly presence watching over each single spot or step from the cradle to the grave might impart a religious and romantic element to lives otherwise dull and dreary, lacking in all spiritual vision, joy, or comfort.¹ But the picture has a less pleasing side. For while some might fancy them to be their friends,² others might fear them as fiends, and the lives of these latter might become well-nigh intolerable by reason of the constant pressure of supernatural terror.³ At any rate, as the religious Roman could find no response to his needs in the

¹ So Bigg, *Origins of Christianity*, p. 8.

² Tibullus, i. 10, 15. ³ Lucretius, i. 62-74, iv. 580 ff., v. 1194 ff.

cold devotions of state worship, he naturally leant more and more on those multitudinous and shadowy personalities, who peopled earth and air around him, whom also he had learnt to love from childhood's lisping days and to whom it was well to pray even now.¹ Official gods required, and received, official recognition: they did not resent secret suspicion or barely concealed scepticism. The domestic divinities, on the other hand, claimed constant consideration and care; and thus prayer to them was little more than prudence. In other words, superstition acquired force in exact proportion as scepticism became frequent and fashionable. For the religious instincts of men cannot be permanently suppressed; and if the established religion leaves men cold and comfortless, it is idle to imagine that the stream will not burst its barriers with violence, winning its way to find for itself some other channels where the long-pent waters may rush ruinously along and bring disaster, unsuspected but irretrievable, over the quiet lands of heedless peace.

The accession of Augustus promised an opportunity of recovery from the horrors of civil war and universal disorder. Out of the throes of that troubled time great ideas had come to the birth, ideas of restraint and rule, unity and brotherhood. But the question remained how to make such ideas effective. To all such as cared for the Empire, it was abundantly clear that without a religious basis and background nothing would be done. The imperial policy, therefore, included a great rehabilitation of national religion. Temples were restored, sacri-

¹ *Prudentius contra Symmachum*, i. 197 ff.

fices redoubled. But the whole thing remained an official and even artificial affair, while the adhesion of such as Horace to the cause of this religious reformation might have made men more than ever convinced of its political necessity, and more than ever doubtful of its sincerity and permanent success. Hence the multiplication of service and sacrifice merely multiplied opportunities for scepticism. Few failed to see that this pious revival was plainly due to political considerations. Even now, at the time of greatest need, the Roman religion made no appeal to the emotions: and if it had done so, the appeal would have come too late.

Already other systems had arisen to supply the satisfaction of those religious needs which the Roman religion coldly and carelessly ignored. We need not take into our consideration the origin and growth of Caesar worship. In Rome it never seems to have been taken too seriously, either by prince or people. Indeed it was often the subject of malicious satire or undignified merriment.¹ Abroad the new cult found immense favour, for it enabled the provincials to give concrete expression to the feelings of patriotic pride and gratitude everywhere evoked by the manifold blessings of imperial rule. But its very success is the measure of its failure. It provided the possibility of uniting all men in a common worship, only because it consented to allow its own functions and formalities to be supplemented from whatever source a man might choose. It did not profess to answer in any way the yearnings of the spirit for the high and holy things of heaven. This was the work of

¹ Cf. Seneca's *Satire on the deification of Claudius*.

religion—or of superstition—and every man was at liberty to choose any or many or none, according to his need or to his fancy. The worship of the deified Caesars, and of the genius of Rome, was not a religion of heavenly treasures, but a recognition of earthly blessings. As such, it came to be regarded as the test of loyalty, and the opportunity of grateful (and gratifying) patriotism. Just because in the religious sphere it meant nothing—for no man was asked to exchange his religion for this new worship—the State could command all men to conform. “Therefore it left the religious problem unsolved, for it left religion in precisely the same position as before. It gave a new worship, not a new religion, to the world; a new creed, but no new faith; a test of orthodoxy, not an inspiration of conduct; much sacrifice, no service; compelling all, it converted none.”¹

It is not the purpose of these Lectures to describe in detail the various philosophies and faiths that strove in the first two centuries of the Christian era to supply the answer to the cravings of the heart, too long suppressed. It is, however, necessary to emphasize the fact that never in all the world’s history was the need more keenly felt, both for moral direction and for spiritual elevation. Towards the supplying of this need, the Roman religion contributed next to nothing. The two forces which came forward to claim the allegiance of mankind were reason and religion; and it is well to set them together and see by way of coincidence and contrast wherein lies the secret of their strength and of their weakness.

¹ The author ventures to quote some words from his book on *The Spirit of Power*, p. 15, where this is dealt with in greater detail.

At this period reason is best represented by the Stoic philosophers, religion by the various forms of mysticism that swept over the Empire from the East. Philosophy had herself deposed and dishonoured the ancient gods, too obviously created by man in his own image; but had not as yet discovered any power to fill the vacant throne. Moreover, the final capture of Greece had made political life there impossible and had thus shifted the centre of interest from the State to the individual. Conquered Greece took captive her conqueror and the philosophies of Hellas were popularised in Rome. Philosophy soon ceased to claim from the minds of men assent to a speculative system, and endeavoured with no small measure of success to provide definite directions for practical morality. Epicurus had his exponents—Lucretius with religious fervour proclaiming the overthrow of all religion, Horace pleasantly championing the master maxim of one that would live wisely and well, to pluck the roses of the passing day. But it was Stoicism that appealed to the Roman mind, for it advocated no light-hearted attitude of *laissez faire*, but rather demanded the observance of an ethical standard of exceptional severity. Its insistence on a high morality, and its lofty conception of conscience found a ready response in the strong and stern elements of the old Roman character. As the circumstances and requirements of the age became more complicated and dangerous, Stoicism came well-nigh to being exclusively ethical and acquired an almost prophetic passion for righteousness. Under the Terror, it taught men to despise tyrants, and in happier days when the mass of men worshipped success and glori-

fied material gains, the Stoics preached self-conquest as the highest victory and self-control as the loftiest virtue to which men might attain.

Such was the message of Stoicism to a world corrupting and corrupt. We turn from philosophy to notice the religions that at this time ruled the Empire. Widely different in origin, they yet came to have much in common. There were the mysteries of Eleusis, the religion of Isis and Serapis, the cult of Magna Mater and Mithras. Determined and repeated attempts were made to exclude these strange rites from Rome, but without avail. Not only did they succeed in establishing themselves securely in the capital, but they gathered almost incredible numbers of adherents throughout the whole civilised world and among the barbarians beyond its borders.

Alike in this, that they refused to break with Pagan polytheism, they declined also to claim for themselves any absolute authority or exclusive supremacy. Thus mutual toleration passed into a treaty of alliance, further cemented by the monotheistic tendencies of a Syncretistic age, so that these various worships ultimately appeared in the guise of one religion with many forms. With stately and impressive ritual and mysterious sacraments, these religions served to satisfy the craving for moral faith and for the vision of life beyond the veil. They stirred the sense of sin and supplied the means for its removal. They spoke of renunciation in life and victory over death. Tender and tolerant to ancient faiths, "they created an all-embracing system which rose above all national barriers, which satisfied the philosophic thought of the age in its mysticism and gave

comfort and hope of immortality through its sacraments.”¹

Mention must finally be made of Judaism, with its far flung organization of worship, and its lofty message of ethical monotheism. Vast numbers of Jews, scattered over the Empire, impressed their heathen neighbours not merely by their creed (to which they attached great importance) nor by their ceremonial (in regard to which much laxity and divergence were permitted) but by their communities, strict in the maintenance of religious convictions, and even stronger on their social side. Seized by some impulse of missionary enthusiasm, Judaism began also at this time to break down immemorial barriers, and to compass heaven and earth in the hope of clutching one proselyte. The motives of these missionaries were not always above suspicion; yet, proclaiming a historical revelation and incorporating believers in the bond of a religious fellowship, they produced a great effect upon the ancient world, and while many were revolted by their exclusiveness, many were secretly impressed by their pure faith and tenacious patriotism. But among the Jews themselves, cosmopolitan tendencies met with increasing discouragement; and the beginnings of the universalistic literature were swiftly and sternly checked. Once more national exclusiveness won the day, and having gained this loss, gloried in its hatred and isolation. Then fell the blow when God broke the prison bars; but they saw only the shattering of the sacred pillars. The destruction of the local sanctuary in Zion might have made it once more possible for the faith of Judaism

¹ Dill, *Roman Society from Nero to Trajan*, 586, 600.

to transcend all national limitations, but it left only as a legacy a longing for revenge ; and the fierce flame of bitter hatred fretted continually to consume "the unclean" and "the apostate." Judaism stands by itself, and by itself it falls.

It is worth while to enquire wherein lay the essential difference between the faiths and the philosophies of the Empire. The question is somewhat complicated by the fact that while the acceptance of a religion was often facilitated by its more broad-minded champions striving to exhibit it as the most perfect system of philosophy, the philosophical professors often embodied their aspirations and ideals in religious phraseology. Results are often revelations of the causes that lead to them and lie behind them ; and in this case the extraordinary difference between what philosophy and these alien worships were able to accomplish will perhaps be the best explanation of the reason which made so great a difference possible.

Stoicism appealed to a few choice spirits of a single class ; these religions laid hold of the masses. The Stoic philosophy captured some isolated individuals ; the mystical religions answered the yearnings of the many for purity and redemption. "Stoicism has no history, save the history of its leaders ; it was a staff of professors without classes."¹ The cause of this strange sterility is to be found in the fact that Stoicism, with all its ethical and evangelistic passion for saving souls and with all its talk of brotherhood, cared only for a very limited class. "The men whom Seneca wishes to save are

¹ Lightfoot, *Ep. to Philippians*, 319.

masters of great households living in stately palaces and striving to escape from the weariness of satiety." The severe Stoic left the great mass of men grovelling in filth and darkness. "They are all equally bad, and they will always be bad from age to age. Every generation mourns over its degeneracy, but it is no worse than its ancestors and its posterity will be no better. The only variation is in its various fashions of its vices."¹

Again, though Stoicism laid stress on conscience, on compassion to our fellow-men, on communion with the infinite, on self-examination, forgiveness and prayer, it is all along the lines of reason, not of religion. Ultimately, the Stoic doctrine of pantheism empties Stoic devotion of more than half its significance, for pantheistic materialism is utterly inconsistent with any belief in the personality of the Supreme. Thus among the Stoics, there is no sense of sin as a personal offence against a person.

Moreover, the Stoic watchword of conformity to nature becomes in practice nothing less than an outrageous affront upon both nature and humanity. A system which exalts apathy at the expense of sympathy will never make much way among the sons of men. Impassive and imperturbable, the ideal "wise man" will not chasten but crush all the affections and emotions. "The Stoic's avowal of cosmopolitan principles, his tenet of religious equality, became inoperative, because the springs of sympathy, which alone could make them effective, were frozen at the source."² The Stoic, in his effort to refine the dross of human nature, cast away the gold and offered

¹ Dill, *op. cit.*, 313, 317.

² Lightfoot, *op. cit.* 322.

iron. "In every age Christian sympathy has shivered at the touch of Stoic apathy."¹ For to the Stoic all things are as nothing, to the Christian all is Christ.

Finally, Stoicism could give no answer to that imperious question which many were asking concerning death and that which should follow death. Sometimes there glimmers a faint hope of immortality, at other times death is, like birth, a sleep and a forgetting. Sometimes it may be welcomed as the great release, at other times lamented, if not dreaded, as the end of all.

Thus far and no further could reason lend its light to struggling souls, and thus we see the chasm between philosophy and faith. As a system of morals, Stoicism was easily ahead of the rival religions that at this time came crowding in from the East. It could indeed claim to be considered in this matter a competitor worthy of Christianity itself. But it failed to give that which men most needed to have given them, if they might live and not perish. It gave much advice that was very good, but it did not fling out a life-line to save souls from shipwreck. It professed to give (and well might the claim be justified) the best results of reflection, of observation, of experience, perhaps of repentant memory; but it claimed no supernatural sanctions and never suggested the possibility of a revelation reaching out beyond the bounds of reason. Thus it was without assurance in such things as divine forgiveness and the hope of immortality. It demanded for its understanding an intellectual equipment such as could only be the possession and privilege of the few.

¹ *Ecce Homo.*

For these it had a moral code, and to these it offered spiritual counsels, such as a wise man might reasonably evolve for his own guidance and that of his pupils. But to the inarticulate longings of the multitude, to that in man which cries out—and with no language but a cry—from man to the divine, philosophy could and cared to offer nothing. Without authority, without assurance, it provided for the few a reasonable rule of life, but in general it remained utterly and wholly barren. It never went outside the man himself. Self-contained and self-sufficient, it gave no motive for morality and promised no power from on high.

But the question may naturally be asked, were not such men as Seneca and Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius truly religious? Most certainly they were. It has been pointed out with justice that "Many headings of the *Imitation* might be attached to paragraphs of Seneca. In truth the great spirits of all ages who have had a genius for religion, after due allowance for difference of association and difference of phrase, are strangely akin and harmonious."¹ Quite so; *great* spirits, who have a *genius* for religion. These have the religious faculty and must exercise it as best they may, allowing for the limitations of temperament and tradition. One such man may find his religion in art, another in science, another in poetry, another in philosophy. But what of the small and simple men who have no spiritual genius? For ordinary souls, religion is itself the commonest and properest sphere for the exercise of the religious faculty, and this argument is pressed home with force

¹ Dill, *op. cit.* 331.

by the Christian apologists. "Christ has not, as had Socrates, merely philosophers and scholars, but also artisans and people of no education who despise glory and fear and death."¹ "Among us therefore," says Justin in another place, "you can hear and learn these things from those who know not even the form of letters, uneducated people and grotesque in speech, but in understanding wise and faithful."² Tatian takes up the tale: "The poor no less than the rich are our philosophers."³ "Our maidens philosophize," he adds in another place.⁴ And heathen opponents were ready to admit the claim: "These same things the philosophers both preach and profess."⁵ Galen, an unprejudiced and critical observer, adds his testimony. "These people do sometimes act in the truest spirit of philosophy."⁶

Among Christians all this is attributed to the power of a living and loving God, and Christians knew this power as the Spirit.⁷ Stoicism acknowledged the universal reason, but had no experience of the Spirit. Thus with many professions they had little power; they knew the soul of the world, they did not know the Spirit of God.

In these things Christianity is only a type, albeit the highest type, of the religions of the Empire. These all endeavour to meet the needs of men, claiming supernatural sanctions, offering authoritative assurances and the promise of power. In other words, they relied on revelation; and it is just in this particular that they are finally and fundamentally

¹ Justin, *Apol.* ii. 10. ² *Apol.* i. 60. ³ *Orat.* 32. ⁴ *Orat.* 33.

⁵ Tert. *Apol.* 46. ⁶ Galen, *de Sent. Pol. Plat.*

⁷ Cf. *Just.* i. 60, ii. 10; *Diog.* 7; cf. *1 Cor.* ii. 4; *Rom.* i. 6.

to be distinguished from philosophy, which advanced no claim of revelation and was content to rest on reason alone. From the earliest days there was a natural desire to assert for the Christian faith that it was itself the truest form of all philosophy, but as regards these two forces that strove for the mastery over the minds of men, we cannot hesitate for a moment as to the category under which Christianity should come. For the Church undoubtedly came forward as the bearer of a special and supernatural revelation, and thus Christianity was from the first ranged on the side of faith and religion rather than on the side of philosophy and reason. Whether this is to be taken as implying that religion is above reason or against it, the sequel will show. Here it may suffice to say that that which is antithetical to reason is not, as has often and eloquently been maintained, the mysterious or even the miraculous, but only the irrational. There is no call to put down reason from her seat, lest we should lose the sense of mystery in life.

The unfruitfulness of Stoicism in the first two centuries of our era is sufficient evidence that reason by itself can never be for the mass of men a substitute or synonym of religion. Men passionately yearned to find for daily needs strength and solace from above, to taste the powers of the world to come, to gain a glimpse of life beyond the veil. There was a desperate desire to break through the blank wall of materialism that seemed to hem them in on every side, and to see, for however short a space, the great realities that shall not be shaken, lying behind this visible and transitory order. Stated otherwise, men

longed for religion ; and of religion, revelation is really the essential part.

Even the earlier religions—the thin abstractions of Rome and the brilliant anthropomorphisms of Hellas—were aware of this necessity. A regular system of revelation was established, and it certainly proved the most popular and permanent part of that which might else have perished without much sense of loss. How indispensable these supernatural powers and oracular revelations proved themselves to be, may be judged from that alliance of paganism and philosophy, which Plutarch endeavoured to establish, but which in the end proved disastrous to both alike. The imperious religious cravings of the age gave rise to a series of spiritual contradictions which resulted in “a union of gross superstition with ingenious theology, demanding too much credulity from the cultivated, too much subtlety from the vulgar.”¹ The doctrine of demons constantly though capriciously manifesting their perpetual presence and power certainly filled once more heaven and earth with gods (though not with glory) and gave free play to the religious imagination. Oracles were rehabilitated, and revelation again became a reality. But philosophy was thus led on “in a disastrous decline to the justification of magic, incantations and all theurgic extravagance.”

As we are considering the relation of revelation to religion, we may perhaps say that the main fault of the ancient faiths of Greece and Rome is not to be found in any claim to direct their worshippers or to discern the future, but in the fact that this claim was

¹ Dill, *op. cit.* 433.

sustained without sufficient seriousness and never received a wide enough interpretation. They were ready to give occasional oracles dealing either with diminutive directions or with exceptional emergencies. They failed to give any full or wide view of man's life and duty based on the revealed will and character of the god in whose name they spoke. They were content to concern themselves with details and to interpret prophecy as prediction. The revelations they professed and preferred to give were on the whole of a miraculous rather than moral order: and the reputation of the oracle rested far more upon the fulfilment of dark and dubious vaticinations than upon any revelation of righteousness embracing the whole duty of man to God and self and brother man, whereby the religion might become the enlightener of daily life.¹

The same is true, though in a less degree, of the oriental religions which were at this time in the way to win the world; for these claimed to reveal the things which it concerned all to know who would in this world find peace, neither fear to enter the lonely valley of the deathly shade. These religions, so far from dissociating themselves from the thaumaturgic element, made common cause with pagan polytheism, and thus bound themselves for ever to that which bound them to the earth. The religion of Mithra, to take a particular instance, made heroic efforts to come forward as a spiritual and moral force. But "the spiritual interpretation of ancient myths is only for the few, who find in a worship what they bring. For the gross masses, the

¹ Cf. Carlyle, *Heroes and Hero Worship*, "The Hero as Priest."

symbolism of natural processes, however majestic, could never have won that marvellous power, which has made a single divine, yet human, life the inexhaustible source of spiritual strength for all the future." These religions, with all their strange moral force, with all their charm of antiquity, and sacramental rite, with all their charity and tolerance "had within them the germs of a sure mortality."¹

The attempt to unite a pure spiritual ideal with nature worship is foredoomed to failure; and so it was that all the revelation and symbolism of these religions ultimately amounted to no more than the repetition of nature's solemn and secret processes. They never could cut themselves adrift from that which was their ruin. They prided themselves on their antiquity and on their tolerance, but a revelation where nothing is new, nothing is distinctive, is barely worthy of the name. So these religions relied on such elements of revelation as might impress the popular imagination with a sense of the miraculous, and by a parade of supernatural power compel the masses to do outward homage while remaining in darkness and gross superstition. All that these religions accomplished was to withstand the progress of Christian truth by "lending the power of a purer faith to other worships which had affrighted or debauched or enervated the Roman world for forty generations."

Religion being in such a case, we can hardly be surprised that Rome refused to come to terms with Christianity. It came from the East; it awakened enthusiasm; it stimulated devotion; it boasted a

supernatural revelation ; it claimed through sacred mysteries to bestow secret power. So the great Romans, though they longed for, and everywhere looked for, something to give power to their moral ideals, would have nothing to do with that faith which would have given them just what they needed. Christianity was a religion and embraced a revelation. The fact was undisputed and indisputable, and so the cultured man of the day turned from what was to him only one more form of oriental superstition. Rome rejected the Christian faith because she admitted the Christian claim. It is the claim to possess a revelation which differentiates religion from philosophy.

We must now proceed to enquire how the Christian revelation itself differed from the revelations put forward by the other religions which came nigh to conquering the Empire in its stead. I have already suggested that in the case of the Delphic and similar religions, revelation was busied, on the whole, with small matters and particular concerns, while the Jewish and Christian revelations dealt with the great things of eternal truth. But it is hardly fair to compare the oriental mysteries with the manticism of Delphi. It would be truer to see the differentia of the Christian revelation in its historical character as against the nature worship of these other cults. It would, perhaps, be yet more true to say that the revelation which was claimed for Christ was moral rather than miraculous, but here we enter on so great and serious a question that we must take some further considerations into account before attempting to give an answer.

A revelation puts forward for man's acceptance certain things or truths which would otherwise have been neither believed nor known. It is natural, therefore, that we should ask on what authority the alleged revelation rests. Such is the question that inevitably springs to *our* lips when we are asked to consider a new religion. But it is by no means necessarily the first question that all men would ask; for many do not ask first of a religion on what authority it rests, but whether it answers their doubts and satisfies their needs. The majority of men are like our Saxon forefathers, who looked upon life on this earth as like a bird flying from darkness into darkness, and for a moment's space fluttering in the warmth and light of the fire in the hall. Whence come we, whither do we go?—if a religion can answer these questions men will accept it always.

It is plain in how great peril a religion lies when it realizes what is demanded and expected of it. Confronted with the question not, On what authority doest thou these things? but, Canst thou satisfy my needs and solve my problems? many a religion has forgotten its limitations and forsaken unwelcome truth for specious accommodation. Bishop Creighton tells a story of how on the occasion of some festival he listened in a foreign cathedral to an impassioned defence of the position held in Roman Catholic devotions by our Lady. The preacher illustrated his plea by a simple tale. A mother was teaching a child to pray, and naturally began with the Our Father. But she could get no further, for the child refused to proceed with the prayer, and, looking up, asked, "But have I not a mother in Heaven also?"

What, asked the preacher triumphantly, could a Protestant parent have said in answer to that child? Now the preacher's argument, if it was meant to carry conviction, rested upon two assumptions: first, that there is an answer to every question; and, secondly, that the answer is that which the questioner desires.

This story may serve as a parable. Any religion professing to be the bearer of some special and supernatural revelation is subject to the temptation to be ready with an answer on all occasions, and to suit the answer to the desires of the questioner. Confession of ignorance on any single point is supposed to discredit the authenticity of the whole revelation. "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known that this woman was a sinner." To give an answer the reverse of that which is required is to court disaster; for men will not readily accept a revelation which declines to supply the satisfaction they demand.

With what fatal facility Christianity might itself have fallen into this error may be seen from the most cursory study of the history of the Catholic Church. We believe that the Gospel is the answer to man's spiritual needs, but this by itself does not prove its truth. Moreover, it is man's highest not man's lowest needs that religion must meet. Over and over again religion has erred in claiming the allegiance of man on the ground that it meets their needs, regardless of truth or reason. To take two instances out of thousands, Arianism made a bold bid for the world's worship by offering a paganized Christ to a Christianized paganism. It sought to win the world by giving to the world what it wanted. Again, even

at this day, multitudes of Christians find their wants satisfied by a corrupt form of Christianity, barely distinguishable (save in its nomenclature) from pagan philosophy or pagan practice. Simple and shallow solutions afford all that is required by those who care only for speedy satisfaction and are careless whether their ultimate standards be false or true. Truth in a religious context is as large as life ; and reason means not only the intellectual faculty, but also moral enlightenment and spiritual discernment. Short of that, you get a barren and thin conception of God's highest gift to man. But in this wide sense Reason cannot capitulate even to Revelation, of which Truth—not emotional or aesthetic satisfaction—is the test.

So, on the one hand, revelation is of the essence of religion. He is no God who is unable to reveal Himself, or indeed who does not continually reveal Himself. On the other, the revelation must not be irrational, for whether it come in forms of feeling and finite figures, or as the manifestation of a mystery beyond the grasp of unaided human intelligence, revelation must somehow make its way to and through the mind of man. For else how could man ever be capable of receiving it? Moreover, we must have rational grounds for the acceptance even of a supernatural revelation. "It must verify its right to teach authoritatively. Reason must be competent to judge, if not of the content, at least of the credentials of revelation ; but an authority proving by reason its right to teach irrationally is an impossible conception."¹

¹ Caird, *Introduction to Philosophy of Religion*, 64.

So it comes to pass that, though at the first men are apt to consider the nature of a revelation rather than its authority, they cannot forever remain content with the former question. We must in the long run know *why* as well as *what* we are to believe. It might, perhaps, be well if we could dismiss all doubt and banish all disquietude. But reflection must do its work, and the free exercise of reason is the condition of all moral and intellectual progress, while its suppression and silencing invariably and inevitably leads to revolutionary reprisals. If to-day the Christian religion continues its claim to be a revelation, it becomes needful to commend the doctrines and mysteries thus revealed to the minds as well as to the hearts of men. And in very early days the Apologists were aware of the need of meeting this demand. They set themselves to state on what authority the revelation rested which they conceived themselves called to defend. They endeavoured to vindicate the reasonableness of their religion by an imposing array of theistic arguments; for in their controversies and conflicts with paganism they had to make much clear concerning the nature and the character of the God whom Christians worshipped. But in argument with the Jews, and indeed with many pagans, not a little concerning the divine nature and providence could be taken as common ground. There was something further than this in the Christian revelation, something distinctive, something new. And the question which the Apologists rightly concerned themselves to answer was this—On what authority do these novel and peculiar features of the Church's claim repose?

Christianity had from the outset one enormous advantage over other religions which it shared with Judaism. The Church claimed from the first to be the witness of a historical revelation. Thus she was safeguarded to no small extent from those perilous possibilities to which the other religions of the Empire eventually succumbed. Not that the Church was free from danger and temptation in this respect, for if Satan may be transformed into an angel of light, the change of light to darkness is an easier as it is also a more frequent and more popular transformation. Enormous pressure was brought to bear upon the Church both from within and without to induce her either to make some terms or treaty with polytheism or else to return a more agreeable and accommodating answer to those who loudly demanded a complete solution to every problem and immediate satisfaction for all their needs. The Church went far—many will think too far—in this direction, but loyalty to her historical revelation kept theories of accommodation and doctrinal development well in check.

As the Christian idea began to find embodiment and expression it often took its colour from its social surroundings and contemporary intellectual conceptions. It is manifest that without some criterion or corrective, the idea might have undergone not merely profound modification, but entire transformation. Such a corrective was, however, forthcoming in those concrete and historical happenings to which the Church was conscious that she was created and called to witness. Here was a standard by which all else might be measured.

The historical revelation served as a test of truth ; and however much Christians might have wished to change their creed by exclusion or inclusion, none would have ventured on such a course without endeavouring (and at least in his own eyes succeeding in his endeavour) to show that such an omission or addition was consonant with, or demanded by, the revelation once received.

In this respect, Christianity may be compared with Judaism. The central thought of the religion of Israel is the unique position and privilege of the Jewish nation as Jehovah's son. That a people should reckon themselves as the children of God, was a notion common to all Semitic tribes. But with how profound a difference does this idea appear in the religious consciousness of Israel ! Among the heathen, the God—perhaps some deified ancestor—is the father of his worshipping family. As the progenitor of his people, he is inevitably identified with their interests. So crass a conception was impossible in Israel, because this sonship began only when Israel's religion also began, by an act of almighty love. The divine deliverance from Egypt was the historical revelation of Jehovah whereby Israel was brought to a realization of its filial relationship to their God. By representing this revelation as mediated through and manifested in a definite historical act, the idea of sonship was freed from a host of degrading associations and invested with a rich store of ethical significance which it took centuries to unfold. To this historical deliverance the prophets recur again and again when insisting on the positive as opposed to the natural

character of Israel's religion and the moral, not material, nature of Jehovah's covenant with His people. The exodus from Egypt was the foundation of Israel's faith, and provided the prophets with an exhaustless argument and a resistless appeal.

As the Jew looked back to this great historical occurrence as the birth of his religion, and saw in every movement of national history a fresh vindication of the ancient faith, so Christians found in a historical personality the basis of their religion and were quick to interpret each subsequent experience as confirming the revelation they had thus and then received. The authority of the revelation in either case was to be found in certain facts which were universally acknowledged as actual historical occurrences, and on which, interpreted as the supreme tokens of sovereign love, both the Jewish and the Christian religion were content to find a firm foundation for their faith. The deliverance from Egypt, followed by the wanderings in the wilderness and Sinaitic legislation, was to the Jew the initial and fundamental revelation of Jehovah. The life and death of Christ, together with all His wonderful works and words—these things constituted for the Christian the all-sufficient authority for the revelation of the Father. "He came from God and taught us these things," said Justin; and remembering what He was and what He did, what further authority could be required for "all those things that God hath taught us through Christ?"¹

So, then, we may summarize as follows: In the conflict of spiritual ideals through the first two

¹ Just. *Apol.* i. 6, 19.

centuries Christianity came forward as a faith not a philosophy ; in the name of religion not in the name of reason, as the terms were and are popularly understood. Of all religion, revelation is an essential feature. The Christian revelation dealt with the grand issues of ultimate truth, but refused to be reckoned among irrational systems, for though the purely intellectual faculty of unaided reason might never have attained, the spiritually enlightened reason could certainly appreciate, that which was revealed. The fact that the revelation characteristic of Christianity was essentially rational as well as religious, prevented the Christian faith from becoming a mirror of this world's desires as to divine things rather than the manifestation of the divine will unto the world's destruction. Further, the Christian faith shared with other contemporary worships these two ideas of revelation and religion, but was distinguished from them all (with the exception of Judaism) by the historical character of that which was revealed. And this historical element—the fact of Jesus, the Christ—secured to the religion founded upon it an exaltation of the ethical over the material and natural elements which brought the other religions of the Roman world to ruin.

Christianity, then, came forward as a revealed religion, positive, moral, rational, historical. Was it also miraculous? To the consideration of this question we must devote the succeeding lecture.

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II

MIRACLE AND CHARACTER

“AN evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign.”

MARK viii. 12.

STRICTLY speaking, the question of miracles is not before us, but only the question as to how far the Church of the second century regarded a belief in miracles as in any way essential to the Christian faith. We have seen that the Church was conscious of being entrusted with a positive and historical revelation; we have now to enquire whether she considered the essence of her religion and revelation to lie in their miraculous character. The issue of our enquiry may be found to involve consequences of so great importance, that it will be wise at the outset to consider the two chief views that have been held as to the place of miracle in the economy of revelation.

A. Miracle and Revelation.

I. The ordinary view is that the function of a miracle is to guarantee and authenticate a revelation which would otherwise fail to win acknowledgement of its supernatural character. “Christ claimed to be superhuman, and the claim required substantiating to

gain a hearing. Attention had to be arrested : expectation had to be aroused : the advent of a new era had to be emphasized. . . . Authority is the essential characteristic of the life of Christ ; and that authority must needs be exhibited in order to be received. It is difficult to conceive how otherwise a beginning could have been made.”¹

Such is a moderate and, on the whole, unsatisfactory statement of the case, for (*a*) it deals only with the miracles of Christ, and says nothing of the Old Testament, Apostolic, and ecclesiastical miracles which must be taken into consideration if we would frame an adequate account of the miraculous in revelation, and (*b*) while offering a defence of miracles which shows that they served a wise purpose “in an age and among a people that was ready to accept miracles, and therefore to whom miracles were a natural, not to say inevitable, mode of address,”² this theory gives no hint as to why that which was so useful at the beginning should, *ex hypothesi*, be useless at the present time. In fact the writer does not go beyond a point which all admit, when he claims for miracles that they accompanied and authenticated the revelation in the eyes of those to whom it was first addressed. But this evades the main question, which concerns not their utility but their truth. The problem of miracles is *not* their purpose in an earlier generation, but their position in the faith of the Christian Church to-day.

We prefer, therefore, the more comprehensive statement of the same case, as put forward by Dr. Mozley in the first of his famous Bampton Lectures. He

¹ Illingworth, *Divine Immanence*, 119.

² *Ibid.*

claims for miracles that they furnish "proof of a revelation." "Certainly," he continues, "if it was the will of God to give a revelation, there are plain and obvious reasons for asserting that miracles are necessary as the guarantee and voucher of that revelation. A revelation is, properly speaking, such only by virtue of telling us something which we could not know without it. But how do we know that that communication of what is undiscoverable by human reason is true. Our reason cannot prove the truth of it ; for it is, by the supposition, beyond our reason. There must be then some note or sign to certify it and distinguish it as a true communication from God, which note can be nothing else than a miracle."

Now, it is a curious fact that the two strongest arguments against this position can be drawn from the actual words of the two distinguished divines whom we have quoted.

1. Dr. Mozley tells us concerning revelation not only that is undiscoverable by human reason, but that reason cannot prove the truth of it. This view can only lead ultimately to the conclusion that Christianity consists of a series of strange supernatural mysteries, undiscoverable by reason and incomprehensible to reason, which, being devoid of all self-evidencing or persuasive power, are only accepted on an overwhelming but irrational display of miraculous attestation. How unfortunate in its results is such a view of revelation, refusing to commend itself to reason, and relying on miracles to command assent, may easily be imagined. It gives an altogether exaggerated view of the need of the Christian religion for external support, thereby suggesting that intrinsically it is

incredible and unworthy of all acceptance. Moreover, it involves us in a series of further difficulties and self-contradictions. For, on the one hand, we must suppose the miracle itself to be a failure, if it does not succeed in convincing those who doubt the revelation. But, on the other hand, the more marvellous it is and the more it compels belief, the more effectually and entirely does it make faith of none effect, and simply forces men to accept something which they can neither prove nor understand but are incapable of resisting. But this is to confess a failure still more disastrous. For it is the highest and holiest law of Divine self-manifestation, to recognize and to respect human responsibility in the highest sphere of all, and by leaving men free to reject, immeasurably to enhance the value of the faith that is willing to receive, a revelation that is sent from God. This will explain why our Lord refused to "come down"—a disastrous descent—from the pinnacle of the Temple, or from the Cross, and why He declined to give a sign from heaven. He will not force faith; and faith dare not dispense with doubt or foreclose discussion, else faith were no more faith. Thus it is that the more completely a miracle succeeds (according to this view) the more deeply does it fail.

2. Secondly, a powerful argument against this view of the function of miracle may be drawn from the statement of Dr. Illingworth that miracles took place, and only took place (for that is the whole point of the passage) in an age and among a people ready to accept miracles, and to whom miracles were a natural, not to say inevitable, mode of address. If that were so, we may take it for granted that

those who were determined to demand miracle as part of the credentials they required for any revelation would have "naturally, if not inevitably" been led to supply the miraculous element if it had not been forthcoming. Such a plea of divine adaptation to the needs of an uncultured and unscientific age almost invites us to consider the weight of improbability under which the miraculous must labour—the mythopoeic fancy, the quick credulity, the mistaken interpretations, the possibility of error, the "natural, not to say inevitable" jumping to wrong conclusions, the lower standards of scientific research or historical accuracy. We can be quite sure that a people to whom the miraculous mode of address would be well-nigh inevitable, would find no difficulty in accounting as miraculous that which another age to whom the miraculous would appear in the highest degree improbable, would find as little difficulty in attributing to natural causes.

3. But perhaps it is Matthew Arnold who has dealt most effectively and simply with this idea of the function of miracle as the proof of revelation.¹ It is the argument of the pen and penwiper; and no more cogent argument can be conceived than that which is embodied in this famous phrase. It is as though a man should say—"Here am I writing something that I believe to be as true as it is important. From my heart I believe it to be true, and with all my heart I desire you to believe it likewise. I will put forward my best powers of persuasion, and employ the most telling arguments in its favour. I will even prove its truth and excellence

¹ *Literature and Dogma.*

by—turning this pen into a penwiper.” What would such a miracle as this effect in relation to the general argument? Most would smile, many would scoff. Its main evidential value as to the matter in hand would be to cause us to view with profound distrust the conclusions of one who would force our faith by so dubious a display. A “revelation” of any kind must be able to commend itself by its own truth; it can never be proved by something quite extraneous to itself. A miracle might, of course, throw considerable light on the character of the person professing to reveal some heavenly claim or divine command. It might make men marvel at his possession of new and unsuspected powers; but it would in no way prove the truth of his statement, or the reality of his alleged revelation. The latter depends for proof of its power on no miraculous accompaniments, but upon its commending itself by manifestation of the truth to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.

4. Moreover, miracles are of such divers orders. Catholics, in particular, have been compelled to exercise much discrimination, not to say diplomacy, in order to differentiate between true miracles and false. And even so, we are not at an end; for of true miracles there may be many authors. The finger of Beelzebub hath still apparently its ancient power. “Only by means of a revelation can we now learn whether in any particular case a true miracle has truly taken place.” The miracle does not confirm the revelation; on the contrary a revelation is needed to determine what is a miracle. “Ecclesiastical ratification is now considered necessary before one

is allowed to say that a miracle has taken place.”¹ This obviously inverts the original order. The ratification practically becomes a revelation, authenticating a supernatural miracle, in place of the older view whereby a miracle was supposed to authenticate a supernatural revelation. We thus are drawn into a vicious circle from which there is apparently no escape.

II. The notion that miracles serve to guarantee a revelation has been so largely discredited that we cannot be surprised that the defenders of the miraculous have shifted their ground, and are now ready to declare that miracles do not guarantee but actually constitute the revelation. This novel suggestion is pressed upon our attention from two points of view—the philosophical and the historical.

1. The tremendous advance which our age has witnessed in every department of scientific research has led many to transform the truths of mechanical science into the falsehoods of mechanical philosophy. We are almost crushed with the sense of the eternal and overwhelming significance of those great laws of God which He (not we) hath made fast for ever and ever, and whereof we are told that they never shall be broken. We are dominated by the doctrines of uniformity in nature and orderly development. And now the ugly features of determinism are arising to mock our dreams of liberty and free will.

It is natural that we should desire to flee from this iron prison-house by whatever way we can; it is natural also that the idea of the miraculous should present itself as a ready means of rescue. It is, no doubt, one way of escape, and that an obvious

Höfding, *Philosophy of Religion*, 28; cf. 171.

one. But, oh! how dangerous and damaging to that very freedom and faith which we would fain defend, to confound the obvious with the only, or to cry out that miracle affords not one but *the* one opportunity of achieving liberty. Let us take heed lest making haste to flee by way of the garden gate, we close such other exits and entrances as still remain, and, when we fancied ourselves free, find our course checked before the hopeless wall of blank materialism, a prisoner yet, deprived by our own doing of any other means of freedom for ever.

But to return: we are told that miracles are the one proof of the freedom of God, the one assurance of His love and personality. We are told that belief in miracles, if no longer easy, is all the more essential; that the miraculous and revelation are thus practically synonymous; that without crediting the miraculous we cannot consistently retain that idea of freedom, human or divine, without which any theory not only of revelation but even of morality must ultimately collapse.¹

Another acute and able writer is equally emphatic: "Law is co-extensive with nature, and there is therefore no way in which a revelation of that which transcends nature can be given in the natural sphere, except by transcending the law by which the natural is normally bound. Miracles, in this sense, do not guarantee or authenticate, they actually constitute the Revelation."²

¹ Figgis, *The Gospel and Human Needs*, 22.

² Fr. Kelly in *C.Q.R.*, Jan. 1909. The writer strongly presses the supernatural character of Judaism, concerning which *vid. inf.*

This is a view which it concerns all those who would commend Christianity to their age to dispute until they die. Is this a time, when we are face to face with immense difficulties surrounding miracle on every side, to fix the whole truth of Christianity upon a particular interpretation of the miraculous which is notoriously insecure? ¹

There is no need to dwell upon the apparent incompatibility of the miraculous with the doctrine of natural causation, as far as we know it now. But reference must be made to the impossibility of ever proving either to a man of the modern mind, or indeed, to our own satisfaction, that a miracle *must* have taken place, that there is no possible alternative to a particular miracle having taken place in a particular way. We may, indeed, be confronted with something to which we are unable at present to assign a natural cause, but surely we cannot maintain of any miracle that *no* natural cause can *ever* be discovered to explain or to account for that which we now consider incapable of such explanation. To take a single instance, the area of the psychologically possible is undergoing continual enlargement. If, then, it transpires that what we considered supernatural, is discovered to be due to natural causes, are we to fling away our faith, and denying the love and liberty of God, betake ourselves to dull despair?

Once more, belief in the Gospel miracles (to narrow the range of our enquiry) must ultimately

¹ Reference may perhaps be permitted to the candid and pathetic retraction of the late Dr. Salmon in respect of the miracle of Christ walking on the sea.

depend upon historical evidence, unless, indeed, fearing for our feeble faith, and determined to admit no doubts (and no discussions) we frankly assume an attitude of imperturbable and impenetrable obscurantism, and refuse to face facts or listen to any argument. Now, when a witness gives extraordinary evidence, that is, of course, no reason to doubt his veracity. But the more strange his story, the more shall we appreciate the necessity of thoroughly testing the truth or otherwise of his testimony. If, for instance, he went further and asserted the occurrence of what we were firmly convinced was an impossibility, we should, without doubting his good faith, assume that in this or that particular he was mistaken. We can only be asked to believe the incredible if we are prepared to accept the further impossibility of attributing infallibility to our witness. Fortunately that claim is confined to a single quarter, with which we are not concerned. Now, if from the scientific standpoint a man is already absolutely convinced that miracle is impossible, he will, of course, find plenty of reasons for doubting or denying the value of the historical evidence for such an event having ever taken place. Or again, if for religious reasons, he feels as firmly that miracle is a makeshift, and its occurrence implies some imperfection in the Almighty (I do not say, he should feel thus, but only if he should feel thus), then he would also be justified in his reluctance to accept the evidence in the same sense as that in which those accept it who approach the subject, not more free from bias than the others, but only with quite another set of presuppositions.

Are we to drive such people out of the doors of the Catholic Church? Are we to tell them that they are false to their faith, and had best make a tardy act of reparation by being true to their doubts. They would answer, "How can I judge of the experience of others? They may have been miraculously fed or healed or raised. I know not: but this one thing I know, that whereas I was blind now I see." Is not this sufficient faith? Will it not suffice that they acknowledge their own debt to the Lord of Light, without being compelled to express their belief in the incommunicable experiences of others? To them, all miracles are meaningless, save such as in their own lives they know to have been wrought by their blessed and beloved Lord.

And yet once more. What if the historical testimony should break down in any single point? Here, again, different people will vary greatly in their appreciation of the same evidence. We must not, of course, browbeat our witnesses, like some prosecuting counsel determined to break down their trustworthiness and truth. Neither, on the other hand, must we, before we hear the evidence, make up our minds as to what our verdict shall be. And so, when we come to consider with what impartiality we can muster, both sides of the case, we find much to shake though not to shatter that simple faith of ours in stories which we have long accepted without reserve and without reflection. We realize the surprising and ubiquitous fecundity of the mythopoeic faculty. We see how frequently facts may be mistakenly recorded, how easily misinterpreted. We can barely escape from the atmosphere of eager and

glad credulity which sought, and doubtless saw, signs from heaven on every possible occasion.

God forbid that I should in any wise deny or seek to destroy the wondrous character of the mighty works Christ wrought in the Gospels. I do not for one moment doubt the *substantial* accuracy of those accounts. But is it not beyond words unwise to bind a particular interpretation of the miraculous character of these occurrences onto the Church's faith, as it struggles to rise to its opportunities of enlightening and leading the thought of the present day, which surely comes from God, not one whit less than that of earlier times? Is our morality to collapse, because a certain view of miracle becomes untenable? Are we to surrender our belief in the personality of God, and abandon ourselves to Pantheism, because, after all, it is discovered that these miracles are capable of being construed consistently with the natural theories of causal conviction? This was not the opinion of that great Doctor of the Church, who knew better than to bid us commit spiritual suicide, should the miraculous ever be discerned to be natural after all. "We say that all miracles (*portentum*—the word emphasizing the supernatural character of these works) are contrary to nature, but they are not. Miracle is not contrary to nature, but only to what we now know of nature."¹

The point is this. No one would deny for a moment that "miracles happened in the full conviction and belief of the early Christians, and with the full significance that they attached to miracles. The only question that is open to discussion is the more

¹ Augustine, *De Civit. Dei.* xxi. 8.

exact analysis of the sense in which we at the present day are to describe them as miracles.”¹ Dr. Sanday is no blind rationalist, bent on destroying the basis of our moral and religious lives. “Deduct something perhaps from the historical statement of the fact, and add something to our conception of what is possible in the course of nature, and if the two ends do not exactly meet, we may yet see that they are not very far from meeting. The question is mainly one of adjustment.”² We may draw no mean measure of reassurance from the firm faith of one who, accepting the narratives of the miracles and the miraculous as they stand (with but a note of interrogation in the margin), is convinced that such questions of adjustment “distinctly do not touch the essence of the matter.”³

2. Leaving the quasi-philosophical demand for miracles, let us glance at the historical argument which strives to identify miracle with revelation.

“There is nothing,” says Matthew Arnold, “one would more greatly desire for a person or document one greatly values than to make them independent of miracles. And with regard to the Old Testament we have done this, for we have shown that the essential matter in the Old Testament is the revelation to Israel of the immeasurable grandeur, the eternal necessity, the priceless blessing of righteousness. And it makes no difference to the preciousness of this revelation whether we believe that the Red Sea miraculously opened a passage to the Israelites and the walls of Jericho miraculously fell down at

¹ Sanday, *Life of Christ in Recent Research*, 225.

² *Ibid.* 223.

³ *Ibid.* 103.

the blast of Joshua's trumpet, or that these stories arose in the same way as other stories of the kind."¹

The argument in answer to this argument takes the form of a question, Was the Old Testament only a revelation of righteousness? In such a case, it is admitted that "miracles are comparatively useless."² But it is contended that in the Old Testament we have something far more than that. We have here a revelation of grace. And this grace is manifested in a series of acts of special condescension and wondrous power. In this case, it is claimed, "the miracles perform an organic function in the revelation, constitute the heart and essence of the revelation.... The maximum of gracious possibility cannot be manifested without miracle. Take away miracle from a revelation of grace, and the revelation can hardly be known for what it is."³

It will not be denied that there is something very attractive in this form of presenting the argument. Christians will naturally welcome it as suggesting a striking and a strong line of defence for the miraculous narratives concerning Christ. Would He be the same to us, would He have been the same to the earliest believers, if He had not walked on the sea nor with five loaves fed five thousand men? Similarly, the Old Testament represents Jehovah as active on His people's behalf, a living force in all that concerned their spiritual and material salvation, a very present help in time of trouble. Should we not, it is asked, have a very different and far less moving picture, if all these miraculous interpositions

¹ Matthew Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*.

² Bruce, *Chief End of Revelation*, 174.

³ *Op. cit.* 175.

were removed from the Bible narrative? "With the miracles retained as an essential part of the story," I quote once more from the judicious and spiritually-minded champion of the point of view we are now considering, "with the miracles retained as an essential part of the story, a gracious purpose towards a chosen people is indubitable, without them it is very doubtful indeed. Remove the miraculous, and what remains is only a singular combination of events having no causal connection with each other."¹

What answer shall we return to such an appeal as this? But let us, in fairness, continue the argument to the end. "Retain the miracles, and the gracious purpose is stringently proved, and the contrary opinion excluded as untenable. The miracles and the purpose thus stand or fall together. To certify beyond all doubt a gracious purpose, miracle is necessary.... Unless some part of God's working be supernatural, it is always possible to deny that conscious Divine purpose.... There is an antecedent distrust to be subdued by a special display so signal as to render unbelief, on the part even of the most faithless, all but impossible."²

All but impossible! The faithless would in such a case be the only ones left with a capacity for faith, for the faith of all but the most faithless would be degraded, if not dead, through such a method. We are here back again in a realm of thought which seems to see nothing inconsistent with the majesty or the mind of God in the compelling of belief. "Stringent" proof is never offered, never given. God refuses to treat men as machines, but respects them

¹ Bruce, *op. cit.* 176.

² *Op. cit.* 177.

as moral beings, capable of and responsible for the free faculty of rational choice. Those who cry out that God should leave no room for doubt as to His own existence or His goodness forget that they are finding fault because the Almighty has declined their suggestion to degrade humanity. A man believing because he has no choice but to believe would be a creature incapable of any sort of spiritual advance. Without the great and grand adventure of faith, the soul of man would be permanently paralysed. Wherever there is revelation, there is always room for doubt. Faith cannot dispense with it, lest she herself should perish. God never *does* "certify beyond all doubt His gracious purpose." "It always *is* possible to deny" His loving providence. Wherever God manifests Himself, through history or nature, through the prophets or the Incarnate Son, through mighty acts or the still small voice, there is always the possibility of doubting or rejecting the revelation, in order that faith may not cease to be faith, or fail of its exceeding great reward.

But to return to the wider question. If we eliminated miracle from the Old Testament, would our conception of Jehovah be so profoundly modified that we should recognize Him no longer as the God of grace?

It is said that "without miracles it is very doubtful indeed" if we should so recognize Him: but perhaps this argument tells more against miracles than for them. Certainly, at the moment it may be very doubtful: but it is precisely in this doubt and difficulty that lies the call for faith. We walk by faith and not by sight. Yet viewed as an age-long

process, the purpose becomes clear as the day : for *we* can now see that those who went forth, not knowing whither they went, were journeying from darkness unto light. But that knowledge was not given to them. These all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise. It is precisely because it is the record of this age-long struggle, this eternal reaching out after God, that the Bible has for us its vast and vital value. It shows us how "in singular combinations of events, having no causal connection with each other," God was working out His high purpose on the earth, so that we, of these latter days, learning from the labours and the tears of those that have gone before, *know* that all things work together for good to those that love God.

B. *The Attitude of the Prophets towards the Miracles of the Old Testament.*

The most interesting and illuminating commentary on the place of the miraculous in the Jewish revelation is to be found in the words and writings of the canonical prophets. As their attitude in this respect is singularly similar to that subsequently adopted by the Apologists, their point of view will repay careful study.

The prophets continually refer to the past history of their people as proof of the providence and loving discipline of Jehovah, but though the exodus from Egypt and the wanderings in the wilderness and the conquest of Canaan are mentioned continually, there is hardly a single reference in their writings to those marvels and miracles which are so prominent in the

national songs and chronicles. The prophets claim to interpret past facts in the light of present faith. They seize on the great historical occurrences which welded Israel into a nation, and in these things they see, and strive to make their compatriots see also, the mighty hand of God. The ideas of providence and purpose are deduced not from any supernatural accompaniments of isolated and wonderful events, but are rather traced in the broad stream of national history. Even the Egyptian deliverance, to which the whole religious consciousness of Israel looked back with profoundest awe as the beginning both of the Israelite nation and of its religion, is regarded as not so very different from other national movements, wherein Jehovah also was at work. "Have not I brought up Israel from Egypt, and the Philistines from Kapthor, and the Syrians from Kir?"¹

Again, with reference to the Sinaitic legislation, which the reverence of after centuries shrouded in flame and thunder and all the usual accompaniments of a divine theophany, the prophets speak not of the material marvels (in which we are invited to believe their faith was based), but on the moral miracle, as it were, of the pure and lofty revelation therein contained. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I visit you for your iniquities."² "I spake not unto your fathers nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings and sacrifice; but this thing I commanded them, saying—Hear my voice, and I will be to you God, and ye shall be my people."³

¹ Amos ix. 7.

² *Ibid.* iii. 2.

³ Jer. vii. 21.

Once more the prophets drew their message, not so much from meditation on the past facts of Israel's history as from hearing and responding to the call of the living Lord. In the supreme matter and moment of their lives, when they knew themselves called to their task by the Most High, they relied on no miracle to assure them of the revelation they had received. They penetrated to the purposes of Jehovah, because the sense of His power and presence leapt up in their hearts and lightened them, a fierce flame of fiery conviction. Having thus apprehended, or rather been apprehended by, Jehovah, the prophets saw in the most ordinary happenings, domestic sorrows or national tragedies, the common things of nature or the usual incidents of life, sure tokens of His will. *The whole basis of their revelation is religious, as the whole burden of it is ethical.*

Finally, it was in present no less—nay rather, far more—than in past history that they found both content and credentials of their revelation of the Most High. Even the mightiest wonders of the past fade into insignificance before that which Jehovah accomplishes before their eyes.¹ The destruction of Samaria and deliverance of Jerusalem, the advance of Cyrus and the fall of Babylon—these things were revelations of the Spirit of God alive and active and all-powerful among the princes and people, the policies and warfares of the world. In the stirring doings round about them, far more than in the lore and legends of the past, they were quick to discern miracles enacted before their eyes. For the prophets proclaimed no God of the past with little more than

¹ Cf. esp. Jer. xxiii. 7, 8.

an antiquarian interest for His worshippers, but a God alive and aflame in this world's ways, working out with resistless and relentless power His inexorable purposes of righteousness. Recognizing miracle in the present, they did not refuse to see the same God dealing wondrously in the past. But it was the identification of their own wills with the spirit of Jehovah, that led them to be prophets in His name, and to draw from present experience the great and grand lesson that Jehovah is alive, and that the Kingdom is the Lord's.

The past, as the prophets read it, was full of spiritual significance—but it was in the record of great historical happenings, not in particular prodigies, that they found its truth. It was natural, once they had learned to know Jehovah in their own hearts and lives, to see that He was always such as they had found Him for themselves to be, and to feel no surprise at His constant providence and gracious interventions. But the manifestation thereof was not in the marvellous occurrences which accompanied, but in the moral meaning which underlay all national trials and opportunities. Belief in miracles led men in those days to the recognition of lords many and gods many. By transferring the emphasis from the miraculous to the moral, the prophets were the founders of ethical monotheism.

There is this further reflection. So far from a series of supernatural events differentiating the religion of Israel from the religions of the nations round about, it was precisely in this particular that they most nearly approximated the one to the other. The serpent-staff of Moses could easily assimilate

the serpent staves of the magicians. A miracle working Jehovah is not very different from a miracle working Chemosh. It is in the miraculous that they are most alike; in the moral, most different. Here we touch upon that wherein the religion of Israel has its true pre-eminence. Jehovah was a God of character. His was not the love which identified itself with the selfish interests of His worshippers. Rather He was revealed as righteous, and thus "as God of justice and right, He came to be thought of as the highest, and at last as the only, power in heaven and earth."¹

C. *The Attitude of the Apologists towards the Miracles of the Christian Revelation.*

The law was given through Moses; the revelation of righteousness through the prophets; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Looking into His eyes, we see the Father's face, and gaze into the depths of holiness and love.

How came the second century to believe, or rather to explain and justify its belief, in Christ? There was, of course, the argument from prophecy. There was also the argument from miracles, and here a great surprise awaits us. Very little reference is made to the miracles of the ministry, though here we must be careful to draw an important distinction between those two supreme happenings—the Incarnation and the Resurrection—and the other miracles. Concerning these two stupendous events, there is not the slightest shadow of doubt or hesitation. They are triumphantly reiterated with a magnificent

¹ Wellhausen, *Hist. of Isr. and Jud.* 17.

assurance. But of the other miracles, little is said. There are perhaps four reasons which will help us to account for this.

I. In the first place, it is plain that the evidential value of a miracle is primarily for those who either witnessed it or experienced it themselves. The full force of a miracle can never pass beyond those who have come into direct contact with its working. As it is passed along through other minds and other mouths, many may accept it on sufficient testimony, but is it not at least equally likely that the sceptical side of man's nature will be aroused, and this awakening will probably issue in an attempt to soften, or somehow to account for, the supernatural features of the story? It was probably the recognition of this fact that has led to what cannot be described otherwise than as a remarkable phenomenon in Apostolic literature. For though the most thoroughgoing criticism of the Gospels has refused to yield any portrait of the Christ save one from which the miraculous is incapable of being eliminated without tearing the original and only surviving likeness into shreds, yet the entire body of Apostolic epistles maintains a complete and significant silence on this very topic. Only in two passages of the Acts do we find any sort of allusion to Christ's ministry of miracles;¹ and there, in the nature of a challenge, directed quite specifically to those Jews who formed the original circle of witnesses of our Lord's mighty works.² Elsewhere in the New Testament (except, of course, in the Gospels) there is no further mention of the miracles of Christ. What-

¹ Acts ii. 22, v. 36.

² ἐν μεσφὶ ὑμῶν.

ever reasons may be adduced to account for this strange conspiracy of silence—lack of interest in the history of our Lord's earthly life, or that there was no lack of interest, but that much could be taken for granted in writing to Christians who had received thorough instruction in such subjects, or that, as we shall see later, Christ *continued* to do and to teach through His Church, and present miracles had more power of persuasion than those that were past—one thing emerges with abundant clearness. It is surely incredible that, had miracles been viewed as either the infallible signs, or even as the sources, of revelation, no sort of hint that this was the case should have found its way into the whole collection of Apostolic literature.

In the second century when men were saturated with the idea of the miraculous, the silence of the Apologists in the matter of Christ's miracles, is no less remarkable than the silence of the Apostles in an earlier generation. Quadratus and Justin are the only two among earlier writers who even allude to these mighty and marvellous works of Christ, and the manner of their reference is of particular interest.

Eusebius has preserved a passage from the *Apology* of Quadratus where emphasis is laid upon the historical character of Christianity. "Our Saviour's works were always before men's eyes, for they were true. They were the men who were healed, the men who were raised. And these were not only seen when they were being healed or raised, but were continually before men's eyes, not only while the Saviour sojourned upon earth, but, after He

had departed, they remained a long time, so that some of them survived even to our own days.”¹

Now in this passage Quadratus is endeavouring to prove the reality of the Christian revelation not by its miraculous, but by its historical character. And, moreover, it is not the miracles to which his readers are asked to give assent, but to the men on whom those miracles had been performed. They would give expression to that which they had themselves experienced, and though they could not communicate their experience to others, they would at any rate impress them by their earnestness and conviction.

In the whole of his *Apology*, Justin alludes to the miracles of Christ but twice, and then not as being in themselves signs or sources of revelation, but as pointing to the fulfilment and credibility of certain prophecies concerning Christ. Not only does Justin leave us in doubt as to whether he himself would have believed them had it not been for these predictions, but he hints pretty plainly that their value is not to be found in anything that they may be or bear in themselves, but only in establishing that argument from the circumstantial accomplishment of ancient prophecies to which he attached so great importance.

“That Christ really did those works which we call miracles, and therefore seemed to be the Son of God, we shall proceed to prove, *not giving credence to those who tell of these things, but of necessity believing those that prophesied ere ever they came to pass.*”²

Again, he says: “Learn from these words that it was prophesied of our Christ that He should heal all

¹ Eusebius, *H.E.* iv. 23.

² *Apol.* i. 30.

manner of diseases and raise the dead. These are the words: 'At His coming, the lame shall leap as an hart, and the tongue of stammerers shall speak plain. Blind men shall receive their sight, and lepers shall be cleansed, and the dead shall be raised and walk.' Now that He did these things you can ascertain from the official acts, compiled in the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate."¹

Miracles here are the proof of nothing else beyond the fact that prophecy has been fulfilled. "*That*," he says, "will, as we suppose, be the greatest and truest demonstration."²

Justin has only one further explicit reference to Christ's ministry of miracles. In the Dialogue with Trypho, miracles are again mentioned as evidence—not of Christ's divinity, but of the fulfilment of prophecy.³ But some words of his on this occasion will furnish a second explanation why the miracles are, if not so lightly accounted of, at any rate so sparingly alluded to.

2. The second reason, then, of this rare reference to the Gospel miracles is that no argument in the ancient world would have carried less conviction. Christians no less than pagans believed that the working of miracles was, as a rule, a matter of magic of which almost anyone might be capable, without any relation to any moral or religious conditions or qualifications. People in that age, to quote once more a strong defender of the miraculous element in Christianity, "were ready to accept miracles, and

¹ *Ibid.* 48.

² *Ibid.* 30.

³ *Dial.* 69, but cf. 39. *ἔργους*, however, does not necessarily refer to the *past* miracles of the Gospels.

miracles were to them a natural, not to say inevitable, mode of address.”¹ But this very fact meant that no religion could have felt assured of popular sympathy and support without a whole miraculous paraphernalia wherein alone superstition sees the supernatural. To claim miracles for Christ was to claim for Him no more than was claimed for every other god and conceded to multitudes of charlatans. Christians, while naturally anxious to prove that there was nothing which any other religion promised or performed which could not be, and had not been, better accomplished in Christianity, were as naturally anxious not to sanction any line of proof which seemed to suggest that Christ might properly be compared at all with these false gods. But miracle was precisely that in which comparison was chiefly possible. And it is not surprising that when a Christian triumphantly appealed to the miraculous ministry in proof of Christ’s superiority to heathen deities, his pagan adversary would go away feeling more than ever convinced that this very comparison had put the God of the Christians on a level with rivals whom He desired to overthrow. It seems that Christians also had an uncomfortable suspicion that whenever they mentioned miracles, they were conceding that Christ was contending on equal terms with the daemons and deities who on all hands were admitted to be active in supernatural works. They seem also to have felt that by insisting on the miraculous character of Christ’s mighty works, they laid their Master open to the charge of being a common magician. Whereupon they would rapidly

¹ Illingworth, *op. cit.* 119.

betake themselves to the argument from prophecy to prove that this was not the case.

Pagans did not need to be convinced of the miracles of Christ. They admitted them readily, even gladly ; for His miraculous claims proved Him to be but one of many. So far from objecting to miracles, they used the miracles to prove He was a magician. We read of some who professed to regard Him as a sorcerer and a suicide.¹

"Lest some one should object," says Justin, "that He whom we call Christ was sprung from men, and did by magic art what we call miracles and therefore was accounted Son of God, we will prove the falsity of this objection—by prophecy."²

Again, when mentioning in the *Dialogue* some of the Redeemer's miracles, he tells how "they that saw these things attributed them to a display of magic, and dared to call him a magician and deceiver of the people."³ And the same charge reappears to be rebutted in the writings of Origen⁴ and Irenaeus.⁵

We may admire and do well to imitate the wisdom of those early Christians, who at a time when no clear line was drawn between miracle and magic (and has that line been drawn quite clearly even now?) declined to base the distinctive truths of the Christian revelation on those external and accidental accompaniments which it had in common with false faiths and heathen worships.

3. But the Christians of the second century were beginning to feel their way to a sounder apologetic

¹ *Acta Pionii*.

² Justin, *Apol.* i. 30.

³ *Dial.* 69.

⁴ *Or. contr. Cels.* ii. 48.

⁵ Iren. adv. Hæc. 22, 4, cf. Clem. *Rec.* i. 58.

in regard to the miracles of Christ. It is significant, for instance, that no miracle is attributed to Christ by any of the Apologists till the close of the second century save such as were wrought upon *men*. This does not for a moment prove that the miracles recorded in the Gospels were not generally believed. We have the very strongest reasons for supposing that they were—entirely and unreservedly. But for apologetic purposes such mighty works as showed dominion over nature seem to have been regarded as valueless, either for proving the dignity or divinity of Christ, or even for demonstrating the accomplishment of prophetic anticipations.

Justin, for instance, contrasts such a miracle as Mithra being born from a rock (which he disproves not by its inherent absurdity, or lack of historical testimony, but by a reference to Daniel ; prophecy being employed impartially to disprove false miracles and establish the true) with the miracles Christ wrought on *men*.¹ When once the implications of this distinction are grasped, we are translated from the material into the moral sphere, where all things are possible to him that believeth.

Justin certainly discerned a moral meaning in those miracles, but his view of their significance is from our standpoint very strange. It is religious rather than ethical. He tells how "Christ healed men that from birth were blind and dumb and lame (according to the flesh), making them by His word, the one to leap, the other to speak, the other to see. Yea, he raised also the dead and made them live.... Now He indeed did these things to

¹ *Dial.* 70.

persuade all who should believe on Him, that if anyone who has kept His commandments should be in any bodily infirmity, Christ at His second coming would raise him up and make him heir of immortality and incorruptibility and painlessness."¹

This is making miracles a source of revelation with a vengeance! But they reveal the wrong thing. They reveal what is already believed, and therefore are no real revelation at all. They reveal an ecclesiastical doctrine, or perhaps a pious opinion, already firmly held, not the goodness or beauty of the divine character which, unrevealed, we should have hardly guessed. The miracles (in Justin's view) are not moral in the sense that they are works of love and mercy, manifesting the consistent character of the good God that is thus revealed; nor is their significance spiritual, for we are not told that through them Christians could come to see that all the diseases of their souls could be healed.² The miracles had, for Justin, an eschatological rather than an ethical meaning. Notwithstanding, the idea of the restoration of all things includes a moral element; for the crowning favour is only for the faithful, and it is a distinct step forward when men are brought to realize that miracles must mean something permanently valuable, if they are to be permanently believed. Justin seeks this permanent value in the wrong way, for he lets his thoughts wander in a semi-material instead of in a spiritual sphere. At

¹ *Dial.* 69.

² All Christians believed this profoundly; but they preferred, following St. Peter, to explain and express this belief of theirs in the terms of prophecy. Cf. 1 Pet. ii. 23-24 and Just. *Dial.* 137.

the last day it is defects of body, not the diseases of the soul, that shall be healed. But Justin is right in this, for (though it destroys the revelation value of miracles) he makes the miracles *illustrate* something which could still be proved ; he does not make them *prove* what without them could not be believed.

It is, however, quite a mistake to suppose that Justin or his contemporaries considered even such miracles as Christ wrought on men as being in any way exclusively or distinctively Christian. In endeavouring to commend the reasonableness of the Christian tradition, he alludes to these same miracles, and claims that it is no harder to believe them of Christ than of Aesculapius.¹ He is right. It is no harder—and no easier.

No easier—unless those miracles of Christ are not mere miracles ; unless, that is, their significance is not to be found in their miraculous character as transcending natural law, but in their moral revelation of selfless and sovereign love. Salvation for the sick in body and for the sick in soul was offered by Aesculapius no less than by Christ. Wherein lay the difference ? Justin and the early Christians believed them both ; why, then, should we believe the one, and give no credence to the other ? Any miracle will do to break the laws of nature. But it is not for this reason that we believe the miracles of Christ. Far rather, we believe them because they

¹Cf. *Origen contr. Cels.* iii. 3, where Origen admits that “miracles have happened in all lands, or at any rate in many places,” and both himself admits and records the admission of Celsus that Aesculapius healed diseases and revealed the future in certain cities where he was worshipped.

are worthy of Him, worthy of God. They have moral value ; and in their moral rather than in their material power Origen saw the spiritual secret of their special strength. "Show me the magician who calls upon the spectators of his prodigies to reform their lives or who teaches his admirers the fear of God and seeks to persuade them to act as those who must appear before Him as their judge. The magicians do nothing of the sort, either because they cannot, or desire it not. Themselves charged with crimes the most shameful and infamous, how should they attempt the moral reformation of others? The miracles of Christ, on the other hand, all bear the impress of His own holiness, and He ever uses them as the means of winning to the cause of goodness and truth those who witnessed them. Thus He presented His own life as the perfect model not only to His immediate disciples, but to all men."¹

Justin had found some measure of strength in comparing the wondrous works of Christ with the miracles of heathen deities (though experience had taught him the dangerous and double-edged nature of such a weapon of defence). Reflection has taught Origen the surer path of contrast, not comparison. "If such were the life of Jesus, how then can He be compared with mere magicians, and why may we not believe that He was indeed God manifest in the flesh, for the salvation of our race?"

These wise and weighty words of Origen show us that Christians were beginning to appreciate certain facts: that it is the nature not the number of miracles that matters ; that it is not their "super-

¹ *Origen contr. Cels.* i. 68.

natural" but spiritual character that is significant; that the miracles of Christ, if merely miracles, may be compared with, believed or disbelieved as much as or as little as, the miracles of magicians; but that Christians accept them as true because they are consistent with the character of Christ. For His wonderful works are of value not as contraventions of the natural order, but as revelations of moral power.

4. But perhaps the chiefest reason why so little is said concerning the Gospel miracles is to be found in the fact that the Christians of the second century witnessed the daily manifestation of the miraculous in the mighty works that were wrought in their very midst. The Gospels were but the record of what Jesus "began both to do and to teach." In the subsequent history of the Church, Jesus (the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever) continued that same work. The Apologists by no means underrated the evidential value of miracle: but it was in the occurrences of the present all around them (rather than in the miracles of the past) that they recognized tokens of the presence of the living Christ. The appeal of the Apologists was to a present power, at that very moment active in their midst. Convinced of present power, they were not very greatly concerned about past miracles. No doubt they believed in these also, and would have defended them, if need arose. But had they undertaken their defence, the argument would have proceeded somewhat as follows. They would have pointed to the same power at work among them still. Surely, then, it would have wrought even more mightily when faith was yet

undimmed and the power was wielded by that Person who, by His Spirit, still gave men strength to do great works in His name. They believed in the past, because they believed in the present. They accepted the miracles of the Gospels, because they daily witnessed "greater works than these."

It is not surprising that from the first the Church claimed power to work miracles. The first mission of the Apostles during the lifetime of the Lord was to "heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils."¹ The concluding verses of St. Mark give us the same tradition grown somewhat bolder. "In my name shall they cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and, if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover."²

The only authentic history of the Apostles in our possession bears witness to a belief emphatically and repeatedly expressed that not only the Apostles but many disciples also exercised gifts which are described as certainly miraculous. This, too, is the work of an author whom Harnack considers "neither credulous nor uncritical."³ But the Acts of the Apostles, with its vivid and varied witness to the miraculous powers of the Early Church, contains but two allusions to the miracles of the Saviour's ministry. Nor can we be surprised, for the Acts is itself nothing less than the proclamation of "the power of the Spirit of Jesus in the Apostles, manifested in history and throughout the world."⁴ This way of looking at

¹ Mt. x. 8.

² Mk. xvi. 17-18.

³ Harnack, *Acts of the Apostles*, xxxviii.

⁴ *Ibid.* xviii.

things is borne out by the Pauline Epistles. St. Paul never once refers to the Gospel miracles, but what need was there to do so, when the signs of an Apostle of Jesus were wrought among his converts "in all patience, by signs and wonders and mighty works."¹ In him Christ wrought mightily "in the power of signs and wonders."² Even among the Corinthians and the Galatians these gifts were apparently by no means uncommon.³ No one supposed that these gifts had perished when the Apostles were no more. Papias, of whom, however, we may say, reversing Harnack's words in praise of the beloved physician, that he appears to have been both credulous and uncritical, is recorded to have learnt from the daughters of Philip the Evangelist a story of a man raised from the dead. Irenaeus, speaking of miracles (claimed by heretics as true—on precisely those grounds which the Church recognized as valid in her own case—yet nevertheless condemned by Catholics) alludes not only to healing and exorcism and prophecy, but implies that some time since, though within the memory of man, "even the dead were raised," not for a moment or two, but to complete and continued life.⁴

Such exceptional miracles are, however, rarely referred to. On the other hand, allusions to the gifts of healing and the power of exorcism are full and frequent. Justin, for instance, explains how

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 12. Exactly the same phrase is used by St. Peter to describe the miracles of our Lord, Acts ii. 22.

² Rom. xv. 18.

³ 1 Cor. xii. 28, Gal. iii. 5.

⁴ Iren. *adv. Haeres.* ii. 32. It is to be noted that, when speaking of these raisings, he suddenly changes from the present to past tenses, but adds that those thus raised abode *συν ἡμῖν*.

Christ came upon the earth to the overthrow of the daemons and all their powers. But this he proves not by a reference to the miraculous cures that Christ wrought through the three years of His ministry, but to those that He works continually in and through His Church. "Even now ye may learn from the things that take place before your eyes. For many that have been seized by daemons throughout all the world, and even in your own city, have been cured by many of our Christian folk exorcising them in the name of Jesus that was crucified under Pontius Pilate. Yea these have cured, *and even now do cure*, those whom all other exorcists and magicians and dealers in drugs have failed to cure."¹ In his controversy with Trypho he tells how *even to-day* the daemons tremble at the power of the name of Jesus crucified under Pontius Pilate, the governor, and being exorcised show their subjection so that all men can see from this the power given him by the Father.² Later, he recurs to the same subject. "*Even now* we that believe on Him that was crucified under Pontius Pilate, even Jesus our Lord, exorcise all daemons and evil spirits and make them subject unto us."³ And yet again, "By the name of this very man, Son of God and first-born of all creation, virgin-born and, as man, subject to suffering, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and was dead, and is risen, and ascended into heaven—every daemon exorcised by His name is vanquished and subdued."⁴ He closes by contrasting Christian power in this regard with the

¹ I Justin, *Apol.* ii. 6.

² *Dialogue*, xxx.

³ *Ibid.* 76.

⁴ *Ibid.* 85.

attempted exorcisms of Jews and pagans, usually unsuccessful and dependent, for such success as they do obtain, upon divers curious arts, fumigation and magical incantations.

Tatian, too, tells us that daemons corrupting the body with divers diseases, and the soul with all manner of wickedness and evil, "yet smitten with a strong word of God," terror-struck, depart.¹ Tertullian's language on this subject is exalted in the extreme, and passes occasionally into grotesque, not to say gross, exaggeration. After describing the nature and the pretensions of those heathen deities, he declares that gods and daemons are but different names for the same substance. "Let there be brought before your tribunals anyone who is obviously possessed by a daemon. *Commanded to speak by any Christian whatsoever*, that spirit will as truly confess that he is a daemon as elsewhere he will falsely pretend to be a god. . . . You, who believe them when they lie, do you believe them also when they tell the truth. No one lies to his own dishonour, and more trust may be placed in people's confessions than denials. In fact, those testimonies of your gods generally make people Christians, for the more we believe them, the more must we believe in Christ."² Tertullian is exaggerated on this as on other subjects, but his evidence supports Justin and Tatian. What he says, if it means anything at all, means that the power of exorcism was general among Christians. So also Minucius Felix gives the same testimony. "When adjured, the daemons either came forth straightway or gradually disappear in

¹ Cf. Tatian *ad Graecos*, vii.-xviii.

² Tert. *Apol.* 23.

accordance with the faith of the patient or the grace of the healer.”¹

This grace of overcoming the daemons was “well known to many,”² indeed, it was manifest to all.³ *For every Christian possessed this power.* Over and over again Tertullian speaks in language which would be quite impossible if the ministry of exorcism were only the privilege of a favoured few.⁴

In this great conflict and turmoil of miracle, men had little leisure to scan the Gospel records. Of course, Christ had Himself conquered the daemons, if by His help Christians could conquer them to-day. Of course, He had accomplished in His own person, that which He could now accomplish through His weakest members. Little value would they have ascribed to a faith which eagerly assented to the wondrous works of yore, yet did not suffice to walk upon the stormy waters, or put the promise to its triumphant test,—“Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to the Father.”

Harnack has some sensible and suggestive remarks concerning those supernatural struggles of the second century. He points out that daemon-possession is barely believed in at the present day, but that in the well-known phenomenon of double consciousness we have what is practically a reproduction of this form of insanity. “The forms and phases in which insanity manifests itself always

¹ Min. Fel. *Octavius*, 27.

² Tert. *ad Scap.* 2.

³ Justin, *Apol.* ii. 6.

⁴ e.g. *De Cor.* 11. “Shall a soldier diligently protect by night those whom in the day time he can put to flight with his exorcisms?” and *de Idol.* 11, where exorcism is spoken of as a common and natural occurrence. Cf. also *Apol.* 37 and 43.

depend upon the general culture and ideas current in the social environment.”¹ Times of great revival and religious agitation intensify this form of insanity, and are productive of all the phenomena of possession. Moved by some inward impulse of faith or by some stirring words, a man becomes at once conscious of himself and also of another being who constrains and controls him from within. “Thus is produced a psychical disease which usually betrays extreme susceptibility to suggestion, and therefore for the time being often defies scientific analysis, leaving it open to anyone to think of special and mysterious powers in operation. In this region there are facts which we cannot deny and are unable to explain.”²

It is easy to brand all the supernatural elements of this daemonic struggle as constituting a reactionary movement, hostile to contemporary culture. But at the back of it lay a profound moral force. These exorcisms were not the mere magical incantations that we are sometimes apt to imagine. There was always the demand for “faith in the patient and grace in the healer.”³ “They were wrought by the praying man not by prayer, by the spirit not by the formula; by the exorcist, not by the exorcism. Conventional means were of no use except in cases where the disease was a conventional thing itself.”⁴

With the advent of Christianity and all the stirring of profound emotions that it wakened into life, this belief in daemon-possession was doubtless intensified. But the Christian religion, which brought this disease to a head, brought also within itself the power of com-

¹ Harnack, *Mission and Expansion*, i. 125.

² *Ibid.* 126.

³ Min. Felix, *Octavius*, 27.

⁴ Harnack, *op. cit.* 127.

plete and perfect cure. Ultimately it was a war with wickedness. The whole world lay in the power of the evil one.¹ Nameless and shameful vices walked abroad, naked and unashamed. Multitudes were lying helpless and hopeless, the victims of vague and haunting terrors. Sinking in a sea of superstition, they abandoned themselves shuddering to despair, as the gloom of supernatural shadows drew darkness down upon the deep. Men need not only to be freed, but to be assured of their freedom. It was not enough to cure them, they must be convinced of their cure. And the exorcism and expulsion of daemons gave them the assurance that they desired. They saw the swine rush violently down, and knew in themselves that their soul was delivered. "No flight of the imagination," says Harnack, "can form an idea of what would have come over the ancient world or the Roman Empire, had it not been for the Church."² Justin and Tertullian knew something of the joy of this freedom, and the latter intimates that many heathen looked with intense yearning to the deliverance which Christians had achieved, for he can ask without fear of quarrel or contradiction, "Were it not for us, who would deliver you from those secret foes, ever busy both to the destruction of your soul and to the ruin of your health? Who would deliver you, I say, from the attacks of the daemons, which we without reward or hire drive from you? This would be our sufficient revenge, that from henceforth those unclean spirits might enter into you and take full possession of the undefended house."³ This was an effective argument, for the whole world

¹ 1 Jn. v. 19.² Harnack, *op. cit.* 129.³ Tert. *Apol.* 37.

shuddered at their dread dominion and confessed that in Christendom there was power to bind the strong and set the prisoners free.

Moreover, this supernatural warfare, which raged throughout the second century, seems something so strange to our ideas that many may smile at the miracles with which the story of it is abundantly garnished. But the Christians of those times were right when they interpreted it as a wrestling not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against spiritual hosts in the heavenly places. For just as the demonstration of the Spirit and of power among Christians went beyond the ecstasies and prophecies common to every religion and included, as the highest manifestation of this supernatural force, those exploits of moral heroism which gave to this new religion of the Spirit a tremendous dignity and untold power for good, so also this "doctrine of devils" was not merely concerned with exorcisms and incantations, but was directed to the destruction of all that darkened life, all that, emptying the cup of whatever made for purity and sweetness, left only the bitter dregs of dull despair. It quickened the sense of sin, and called upon all who knew themselves delivered from the evil bondage to undertake unflinchingly a glorious assault upon the strongholds of vice and wickedness.

So then, in these miracles wrought in the name of Christ and by His power, we are dealing, not with the remnants of a gross material superstition, but with a vast reserve of moral strength. They represented a crusade of righteousness. It is idle at this time of day to regret the fashion of the armour

men wore in olden days. These warriors may have been clad in a strange panoply, but they struck out with might, and in their hands was the Sword of the Spirit of God. *We* hang the mighty weapon in the hall, and weave fair tales about its former strength. We have much to say concerning its cumbrous form and strange devices ; we have much to say, and our poets sing pleasantly in our ears about the same. Thus we say, and thus we sing : we do not rise and swing the sword and slay withal. These ancient warriors accomplished more than we ; for, grasping this same sword of the Spirit they overthrew the strongholds of superstition and of sin.

D. *Considerations, drawn from the above, as to our own attitude to the Miracles of Christ and of His Church.*

We have endeavoured to trace the attitude of the Christians of the second century to the miraculous in general, and to the miracles of Christ. Towards these latter, we have found that their position is by means so precise and positive as we might have expected. Little, very little, is said concerning them. In no sense are they regarded as all-important signs and sources of revelation. No one attempted to regard them as a firm foundation for any of the great articles of the Christian faith, such as the liberty of a loving God or the Divinity of Christ. We have endeavoured to trace some of the principal reasons which contributed to this result. To sum up, we may say that in the first place miracles were evidentially effective only for those who actually witnessed or directly experienced the

same. Secondly, if stress had been laid on the miraculous, the tendency would have appeared to be towards identifying the claims of Christianity with the miraculous exhibitions and extravagances of pagan religions rather than differentiating it from the fancies and the falsehoods of other faiths. Thirdly, Christians began to see that in the moral rather than in the miraculous lay the real secret of the Church's strength. Only so far as the miracles of the ministry conformed to this standard were they considered to be of vital value, but it took many years before this was realized, and longer yet before it was acted on. Fourthly, Christians cared little for the narratives of mighty works done in the past, when all around them they saw the power of the Cross subduing evil spirits and casting out daemons to utter destruction.

No one is likely to accuse Bishop Westcott of any undue depreciation of the supernatural character of Christianity, and it is therefore comforting to find these conclusions corroborated by his clear and comprehensive summary of the teaching of the Apologists in this regard. "The greater part of their references are made to the teachings of the Saviour and not to His Works. They spoke of Christianity mighty in its enduring and godlike character. They spoke of Christ as Him of whom the prophets witnessed. But miracles—those transient signs of a divine presence—are almost unnoticed in comparison with the words which bear for ever the living stamp of their original source."¹

It remains to ask if we may not learn some needful lessons from this attitude of the Apologists

¹ Westcott, *History of the Canon*, 108.

to miracles which, once a support, have largely become a stumbling-block to faith.

It was in present not in past miracle that the Church felt and saw the power of Christ. What, then, was her attitude to the Gospel story? We may perhaps find an answer by noting her attitude to the lively oracles of God, preserved in the Old Testament. Here we find an illuminating illustration of the way in which present experience was used to unfold the past, making it intelligible and real. The Church, believing that the sacred writers were inspired to record not merely their individual sufferings and sorrows, but rather such things as were common to and typical of whatsoever should come upon the saints of God in various paths of life, made the Old Testament the mirror of her own experiences, and thus found therein full measure of support and gracious help. Not otherwise did they look into the life of Christ, and find, in its pure light, their own dangers and temptations, their own solace and strength, imaged and intensified. In the history of that life, they saw the same sins, the same spiritual activities ranged in battle to crush the Lord of Life, saw also in Him the same grace and truth, whereof they had themselves had experience, active in love to the redemption of mankind. Believing in signs and wonders wrought by Christ among them at that very hour, men could not do otherwise than believe the miracles of the ministry *as illustrations but not as proofs* of the same power at work in earlier days. For if the miracles of the Christians were splendid signs of the presence of God in their midst, how much more might the miracles of Christ

Himself be recognized as the supreme tokens of divine power and goodness, manifest in Him in whom dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

Secondly, it is clear that in their eyes it was in the moral rather than in the miraculous character that the spiritual significance of Christ's mighty works shone forth. It is no less idle to complain of the manner in which men at various periods clothe their thoughts than of the manner in which they dress their bodies. Just as a moral meaning and motive lay behind the Church's miracles (even those which seem to us most full of wonder and superstition), so the works of Christ may often have been arrayed in material marvels, but were at heart always known to be a moral force. Claimed as consistent with Christ's character, they were believed, because credence could be given to this very claim. The material miracles were but the fringe of the robe that clad the Son of God.

Concerning these two things, the Church of these enlightened days may learn much from the wisdom of a simpler, the caution of a more superstitious, age.

1. The defenders of miracle and the opponents of miracle are apt, like mercy and truth, to meet together and kiss each other in a way they little think. The latter, starting with the assumption that "miracles do not happen," are often ready to exclude from life the possibility of God's perpetual providence and gracious guidance. The former, in their insistence that "miracles *did* happen," are lamentably quick to emphasize the uniqueness of the Gospel miracles by suggesting that such things happen now no more. "The cessation of miracles

was as needful as their occurrence.”¹ We are told that we must walk by faith and not by sight, and “to make this possible, miracle in the ordinary sense must cease.” But this is to invert the true order of things. Browning, indeed, in that wonderful study, “A Death in the Desert,” says that “miracle was duly wrought when but for it no faith was possible.” But it is not miracle that creates faith, but faith that creates miracle. Miracle does not create, but calls for, faith. We have the very highest authority for saying that even Christ *was not able* to do mighty works where faith was wanting, while for him that believeth no miracle is too stupendous. It was just because the Church of the second century had faith, that miracle continued and did not cease.

For the question is not—Did miracles happen, or did they not happen? In this sense Harnack is right when he declares that “miracles do not matter.”² The final and fundamental question is rather this,—*Do* miracles happen? Can faith still see the hand of God in the occurrences of every day? Can faith in a living God still move the mountains, or, harder still, move men to move mountains as of old? Can faith still awake with joyous and undoubting response to divine guidance and divine impulse? On the answer to these questions depends the answer we shall give to that further question as to the miracles that happened long ago. Harnack is surely right when he says: “The question on which everything turns is whether we are helplessly yoked to an inexorable necessity, or whether a God exists who rules and governs, and whose power to compel

¹ Illingworth, *op. cit.*

² Harnack, *What is Christianity?* 31.

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nature we can move by prayer and make part of our own experience.”¹ Ritschl is right in this, if wrong in much else, when he declares that “every man will experience miracles in his own life, and such experiences make it the less necessary to find fault with the miracles which other people have experienced in theirs.”² It is interesting and instructive to place side by side with this utterance two statements of Dr. Sanday on this subject: “*Our* attention is fixed upon a different order of causation, and when miracles happen we call them by another name. There are many things, especially in the region of spiritual experience, that might be called miracles, if we cared to use the word.”³ In similar strain he concludes his discussion of the miracles of the Old Testament: “We cannot help noticing how the evidence for these miracles becomes stronger as they approximate to the type supplied by answers to prayer... but the crude interferences with natural law elude our grasp.”⁴ In other words, we shall do well to follow the faith of the ancient Church—not pinning our hopes for the present to theories of the past, but being ready to interpret the past by the help of present experience. Knowing in our own hearts and lives something of the power, the pardon, and the peace of God which passeth knowing, we shall be tender and tolerant to those who share and value the same experience but give it different expression. We shall not invert this order to the danger of our own, to the destruction, may be, of others’ faith, making the very possibility of religion depend

¹ Harnack, *What is Christianity?* 31. ² Ritschl, *Unterricht*, 15.

³ Sanday, *Life of Christ in Recent Research*, 225. ⁴ *Ibid.* 212.

upon any particular historical judgement or any individual interpretation of the same. For, after all, the historian can never regard a miracle as an absolutely sure historical event.¹ Every individual miracle must remain open to doubt, *i.e.* historically doubtful, "and a summation of things doubtful can never lead to certainty."² Luther is only stating a fact writ large and plain on every page of early Church history: "If the miracles of Christ had never taken place, or if we had known nothing of them, we should still have sufficient hold on the word, without which we should have no life."³ Miracles *do* happen: once let this be granted, and then the controversy as to whether they *did* happen or no becomes a question of comparative indifference; though at the same time this fact that they do happen makes natural and almost inevitable the supposition that they did happen also. Such at any rate seems to have been the attitude of the Apostles and Apologists.

2. And the second thing is this. It is not because of its miraculousness that a miracle is of value to religion. To make it so, is not to help but to hinder faith. It may be asked, it has indeed been asked with vivid eloquence from this very pulpit, how, without miracle, can we be sure of any heavenly revelation, or believe with security that God has indeed visited and redeemed His people. Is not, therefore, the miraculous character of the miracle above all the most important and significant? We have already shown that absolute sureness and

¹ In the sense of what is written on pp. 45-46.

² Harnack, *History of Dogma*, i. 65.

³ Luther, quoted by Herrmann, *Communion with God*, 184.

security are incompatible with the manner of God's self-manifestation to men. But we have no need to labour this point, for the very same sermon that asked the question seems to supply the sufficient answer. "Miracles, in fact, give men just that thrill, that sense of exhilaration and freedom which all of us experience in any conspicuous act of heroism. . . . They show that man is *not* the slave of circumstance. Here, we say, is an act which breaks the chain of environment, and uplifts us with a sense of our freedom—to go and do likewise. This is its appeal. So with revelation."¹

Quite so. In other words the demand for miracles may adequately be met by pointing to the moral teaching, life, and character of Christ. "Conspicuous acts of heroism." The eloquent preacher quoted "Colonel Picquart apparently ruining his career to defend Dreyfus; a schoolboy saving another from drowning." What, then, of the Cross of Christ, the ruined career of Him that, saving others, would not save Himself? If those other instances can teach so much, what of the infinite self-sacrifice of that matchless love? What of the measureless compassion of His perfect pity who, having loved His own, loved them to the end, and laid down (no greater test of love) His life for them whom He deigned to call His friends? It was in the washing of His disciples' feet and drying them with a towel, not in the walking on the waves and the stilling of the storm, that the Son of God, our Saviour, left us an example, that we should be free—to go and do likewise.²

¹ Figgis, *Gospel and Human Needs*, 23.

² 1 Pet. v. 5 τὴν ταπεινοφροσύνην ἐγκομβώσασθε, an almost certain reference to John xiii. 4, 14.

The Church recognized that the distinctive thing in her miracles was that they included acts of moral heroism, and in His miracles, that they were consistent with His character.

Here was the greatest miracle of all—in lives converted and transformed, in hearts aglow with love, and souls cleansed from sin to serve their God in all sincerity and truth.

“We that once took pleasure in impurity do now embrace chastity alone. We that used arts of magic do now consecrate ourselves wholly to the good and unbegotten God. We that above all loved the ways of wealth do now surrender all we own, distributing alike to all in need. We that were full of hatred and thoughts of murder do now since Christ’s appearing share hearth and home. We pray for our enemies, and seek to persuade those that hate us wrongfully, in the hope that they too living as Christ would have them live, may obtain from God the Lord of all that which we hope ourselves also to receive.”¹

Men knew that they were free, and sought to establish their freedom, not by dependence upon any theory of past miracles, but by putting to the proof the power that they knew that they possessed. As the old hymn has it:

Earth, that long in sin and pain
Groaned in Satan’s deathly chain,
Now to serve its God is free
In the law of liberty.

My brothers, suffer me in conclusion to make a double appeal that will form a natural conclusion of our study of this subject.

¹ Justin, *Apol.* i. 14.

a. Most sincerely and most solemnly let me plead for intense caution before any particular interpretation of the miraculous is elevated into a dogma of the Christian faith. Do let us hesitate to give countenance or currency to any sweeping statement which would seem to imply that without the miraculous, in the ordinary sense of the word, we can have no warrant of divine revelation, or that to question the miracles of the Gospels is to abandon belief in the supernatural Christ, or that failing to accept these marvels as marvels we drift into pantheism, "doubt, determinism and disbelief." Above all, let us be infinitely tender and tolerant to those who, having faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, cannot receive the miracles exactly as they are recorded in the Gospels or interpreted by us. Let us dwell with joy upon their trust and loving devotion to the Lord, rather than, emphasizing their want of confidence in ancient records and modern interpretations, and sternly bidding them be "true to their doubts" and false to their faith, drive them sadly but surely into the camp of the enemy and the blasphemer.

How did the Apostles come to believe in Christ? Through what He did, in word and work, they came to the knowledge of what He was. We travel by a somewhat different path. Knowing, or at least hearing, who He is, we can more easily interpret what He did. Hence we find no difficulty in the miracles because of our antecedent faith, without which miracle is not only incredible but ineffectual, not only ineffectual but impossible. Faith in Christ is a thing far greater than belief in miracles. It is

the former which makes the latter possible at all. Let us imitate the care and caution of those that went before, and never, by inverting the order of their importance, give any man the impression that belief in miracles is the indispensable condition of faith in Christ. Let men come to Him as they will, even by paths unfamiliar to ourselves, and when they are come to Him let us be proud and glad to welcome them as brethren.

β. And secondly, let me plead for a more vivid sense of the miraculous in every-day life. The message of the miracles in the Apologists was the recognition of the presence and power of God among themselves. They shifted the centre of gravity from the marvellous to the moral, from the past to the present. "God is alive" was the burden of their belief, "God is alive. He is made known through Christ, and Christ is alive for evermore, and His living Spirit ranges through the world, and rules mightily within the Church." It is all so different from the present day, when defenders of miracles by maintaining their present impossibility rob them of their surest defence.

Let me quote some fine words from a striking sermon by F. W. Robertson, of Brighton. It is, he says, the intention of a miracle to manifest the Divine in the common and ordinary. For instance, in a boat on the sea of Tiberius, the Redeemer rose and rebuked the storm. Was that miracle merely a proof of His divine mission? Are we merely to gather from it that then and there, on a certain day and in a certain obscure corner of the world, Divine power was at work? It is conceivable that

a man might credit that miracle, that he might be exceedingly indignant with the rationalist who would resolve it into a natural phenomenon ; and it is conceivable that that very man might tremble in a storm. To what purpose is that miracle announced to him ? He believes in a God existing in the past, but not in the present ; he believes in a divine presence in the supernatural, but discredits it in the natural ; he recognizes God in the marvellous, but does not feel Him in the wonderful of every day. Unless it has taught him that winds and waves *now* are in the hollow of the hand of God, the miracle has lost for him its meaning.

“The extraordinary is simply a manifestation of God’s power in the ordinary. Nay, the ordinary miracles are greater than the extraordinary, for these are subordinate to them ; merely indications and handmaids, guiding us to perceive and recognize a constant presence, and reminding us that in every day the miraculous and godlike rule us.”

The appeal of the Apologists was to a *present* power. It is possible so to believe in a God of the past as to forget Him in the present. On the other hand, believe in Him, living and loving in the present, and you will not find it hard to believe of Him thus also in the past. Knowing the love and grace of Jesus, we shall recognize the truth of the Gospel portrait. “He must do miracles, not in order to prove formally that He is what He claims to be, but to be consistent with Himself, true to Himself, like Himself. What can the spring do but flow ? And what should incarnate grace do, but be gracious, according to the measure of His power,

doing good in every possible way as one full of the enthusiasm of humanity.”¹

May we not perhaps go further in this matter of the Saviour's miracles? I think we can. Remembering that miracles are the illustrations not the proofs of power, and that in their moral not in their marvellous character lies their strength and their significance, we may perhaps proceed as follows,—

It was the experience of believers that the presence of God was known by power, and the only way in which it would have been at all possible to picture Christ as the perfect revealer of the Father was to show that from Him proceeded power. Thus we can see that the Gospels were profoundly true to religious fact, when they are unanimous in their assertion that Christ did many mighty works. For if we admit a historical Christ at all, then we must admit that, in the full belief of His followers, He worked miracles. It is no hard matter to give a general assent to the truth of this impression without committing oneself to implicit belief in every detail. To ascribe miracles to Christ was the only way in which Christians were at all able, adequately, to express or to explain the impression that He made upon the hearts and minds of those that followed Him. It accounts for Him being universally acknowledged to be greater than St. Paul. The latter would fear no comparison with the greatest men of all the world. How then was Jesus greater than St. Paul? Not merely because St. Paul ascribed everything to Him. A life to make this great impression must somehow have been different from

¹ Bruce, *op. cit.* 183.

other lives. Prayer is power. Jesus in perfect prayer and constant in closest communion with the Father saw with undimmed vision God in everything; and because He thus saw God in everything, there was nothing in which He had not power. Is not a Christ that in some sense worked miracles the only way to account for the peculiar and permanent impression that He made? In other words, such miracles as Christ wrought and the power to work such miracles are indeed part of the manifestation of that love and mercy which was Christ's revelation of the Father.

Yet, however true this may be, it must never be forgotten that it was through the present that men came to see the meaning of the past. It was through the power of a Christ alive for evermore that men came naturally to the conclusion that mighty works and miracles of mercy must have been characteristic of Him, then even as now. Through their own experience they interpreted the history of Jesus. And there was no other way of expressing their conviction that He was the present source of all their strength than by clothing it in a record which gave full and frequent token of the power He had wielded from the beginning. Faith made possible the miracles of Christ, even as want of faith had aforetime made them impossible. Faith made possible the miracles of Christ—not only for those who were helped and healed, but for those that read of them, and those that recorded them also.

This may seem but a poor and inadequate conclusion after so lengthy a discussion. It will not satisfy the demand of some for something more

strikingly supernatural. There is among men a morbid craving after the marvellous. Many, moreover, are willing to see God in the past, yet have little leisure and less care to see Him in the present. Many have a firm belief in the miraculous, but are fixedly blind to the moral element in Christianity. Christ refused to grant the requests of such. Herod, of a long time desirous to see Christ that his curiosity and sense of the supernatural might at last be gratified, was doomed to disappointment; and to the evil and adulterous generation that sought after a sign, He replied with stern and solemn emphasis—"Verily, I say, no sign shall be given to this generation."

Such people, even if one were raised from the dead, would not believe—a sentence to which the history of the chosen people supplies the truest and most tragic illustration. They see God in the supernatural, but not in the ordinary happenings of everyday life. That is where the Apologists saw Him, and that is what helped them with quickened faith to scan the records of the past. "God is alive"—that is the message of the early Church, with its present miracles and moral marvels. "God IS our hope and strength; a very PRESENT help in trouble." But it is an evil and adulterous generation that seeketh after a sign, and no sign shall be given to this generation.

III

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WORD

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III

CHRIST THE LORD AND CHRIST THE WORD

“Is Christ divided?”

I COR. i. 13.

“THEY conceived Christianity as essentially a divine doctrine, and by them all its distinctive features were subordinated to this conception or neutralized.” This is Harnack’s charge against the second century Apologists. “By their intellectualism and exclusive theories, the Apologists founded philosophic and dogmatic Christianity.... What we here chiefly understand by intellectualism is the placing of the scientific conception of the world behind the commandments of Christian morality and behind the hopes and faith of the Christian religion, and the connecting of the two things in such a way that this conception appeared as the foundation of these commandments and hopes. Thus was created the future dogmatic which still prevails in the Churches and which presupposes the Platonic and Stoic conception of the world, long ago overthrown by science.”¹

¹ *History of Dogma*, ii. 229.

Such, in Harnack's view, was the disservice done to the Christian faith by those who came forward to defend it, and he is not alone in framing this indictment against the Apologists. Loofs is equally emphatic, and characterizes their Christology as having had "a fatal influence upon the subsequent development. They shifted the starting point of Christological speculation from the historical Christ back into the realm of pre-existence, and depreciated the importance of the actual life of Jesus as compared with the doctrine of the Incarnation."¹

Nor can we thus come to the full measure of the harm they wrought. The unhappy (though, unfortunately, not unfruitful) connection of Christology with cosmology issued in a forced alliance with Greek philosophy, and transformed the religion of redemption into a speculative system. We are invited to the further consideration of the inadequacy of the Logos doctrine even in the sphere in which it might seem most successful. "Their doctrine of the Logos is not a 'higher' Christology than the generally prevailing form: rather it falls behind the genuinely Christian estimate of Christ. It is not (in their philosophy) God who reveals Himself in Christ, but the Logos, the depotentiated god, who as god is subordinate to the supreme deity."

The stimulating though somewhat surprising conclusion of Dr. Denney's fine book on *Jesus and the Gospel* is devoted to a strong and severe condemnation of all creeds and all confessions, if viewed in the light of theological tests qualifying for Church

¹ Loofs, *Dogmengeschichte*, 129.

membership. Neither his argument nor his appeal are wholly convincing or wholly consistent;¹ but there can be no question of the sincerity of his passionate protest on behalf of complete freedom in the matter of all theological presuppositions and problems. Yet this same writer insists that "in all this there is no idea of rediscovering the Gospel or of disparaging theology."² He is convinced, to use his own words, that "the Christian attitude towards Christ, and a certain type of convictions about Christ, are not unrelated to each other. There can be no such thing as a final schism in human nature, no possibility of permanently opposing faith and knowledge, or of permanently playing off the one against the other. The Christian attitude to Christ and the Christian experiences into which men are initiated by it must, in proportion as they are truly apprehended in the mind, lead to a body of Christian convictions or a system of Christian doctrine, in which believing men will find themselves at one. This is not questioned in the least."³

And once again, "When Christ constrained men to assume what we have called the Christian attitude to Himself, He constrained them at the same time to ask who the Person was to whom such an attitude was due. He constrained them to think what His relations must be to God and man, and even to the universe at large, to justify the attitude He assumed towards them."⁴

This is a point of view entirely opposed to that adopted by the Ritschlian school, which assumes

¹ See Lecture IV.

² Denney, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 407.

³ *Ibid.* 393.

⁴ *Ibid.* 396.

(when it does not assert) that we must seek for no explanation of our religious experiences, nor allow ourselves to be drawn from the region of spiritual certainties to the realm of the transcendent where certainty is unattainable. But Dr. Denney will have none of this plausible and fascinating plea. "We must seek for the explanation of a phenomenon so stupendous as a man who has the religious value of God. We must try to define the relations in which a man who occupies a place so exclusively His own, stands to God on the one hand, and to men on the other. We must, when we consider the immense historical importance of Christ try to work our religious estimate of His human personality into the framework of all our thoughts about God and man, the world and history."¹

Opposition to the Ritschlian theology is, therefore, not necessarily the outcome of an undue or indiscriminating devotion to confessions or creeds. It is, on the contrary, due to the desire to safeguard and enlarge the liberty of Christian thought, not to enclose it within yet narrower limitations, or to fetter it with bands of our own forging. It is in the interests of Christian freedom that the claim is advanced, not merely to express but to think out

¹Denney, *Studies in Theology*, 48. Cf. *ibid.* 14: "The Christian cannot suppress the instinctive motion of his mind to seek an explanation of this extraordinary Person. He cannot say, in the long run, No man knoweth the Son save the Father, and it is idle for me to seek any other explanation than the purely religious one. We have no choice in the matter but to seek an explanation. We must, as rational beings, try to clear up to our own minds what is necessarily involved in the existence among men of a Person who has the religious value of God."

our convictions concerning Christ. And this process was operative from the beginning. It is not to be supposed for a moment that the Apostles were destitute of all intellectual interests or needs. The claims of Christ, then, as always, stirred and stimulated the Christian intelligence to seek a satisfying interpretation of that fundamental fact—the historical personality of the Saviour—on which the whole edifice of Christian duty and devotion had been erected. Harnack admits with sorrow that which cannot with sincerity be denied.¹ Even in the Apostolic age, speculation had been busy on such subjects as the pre-existence of the Lord, His significance for the whole human race, and His relation to the Father; and on those points conclusions had been reached which had resulted in various estimates as to the Person and dignity of Jesus. In other words, Harnack is conscious that in the sharp distinction that he draws between the metaphysical and the religious, he has the Apostles against him. “We may be content in the meanwhile to be on their side.”²

Ritschl himself, in his original and illuminating treatment of the Godhead of Christ, has shown admirable appreciation of the Apostolic testimony as to the Divinity of Jesus.³ He is perhaps more fortunate in his recognition than in his interpretation of the fact. These daring and distinctive discussions concerning our Lord’s divinity may give us no small measure of guidance as to the Ritschlian theology, for in them Ritschl is to be seen at his best—and at

¹ *History of Dogma*, i. 82.

² Denney, *Studies in Theology*, 18.

³ Ritschl, *Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung*, iii. 364.

his worst. Disregarding for our present purpose Ritschl's "arbitrary and artificial" exegesis (the words of a sympathetic and indulgent critic) of particular passages, we may note his valuable insistence on two important considerations.

1. Ritschl emphatically repudiates the idea of a Christianity without Christ. It is through Christ, *and through Christ alone*, that we can attain either to the perfect revelation of the Father, or to the perfect religion, where we know salvation as eternal life in Him. "Jesus was conscious of a new and hitherto unknown relation to God, which He declared to His disciples." Ritschl rejects the view that Jesus taught a lofty morality and never transgressed a purely human estimate of Himself, and that it was only through wholly extraneous influences that His followers have been led to see in Him the incarnation of the Deity. Such a view is characterized by Ritschl as historically false.

2. There is ample Biblical material from which to construct a doctrine of the Godhead of Christ, though those who expect the New Testament to yield a uniform doctrine on such a point are doomed to disappointment. Ritschl distinguishes and discusses the two main types of apostolic presentation which give expression to the experience of the Church as to the unique religious value of her Founder, and which we have taken as the title of this lecture.

Christ the Lord and Christ the Word, he characterizes respectively as the Pauline and Johannine types of Christology. Christ is called Lord in virtue of His heavenly exaltation over the world and over

the Church. Christ is called Logos, because in His human person we have God's final revelation and the full manifestation of all His grace and truth.

We are not likely to appreciate the Christology of the Apologists, if we misunderstand the significance of the Apostolic attitude to the questions and conceptions clustering round the Person of Christ. Following out the lines laid down by Ritschl, we may notice, first, the Christian attitude of the Apostles to Christ, and then the interpretation of that attitude as it confronts us in the pages of the New Testament.

1. In the first place, there can be little question or controversy held by Christ in His own preaching. Harnack, it is true, declares that "what belongs to the Gospel, as Jesus preached it, is not the Son but the Father alone." But, he continues, "Jesus belongs to His Gospel not as part of it, but as its embodiment. He is its personal realization and its power." As far as we are able reverently to trace the self-consciousness of Jesus, we find it revealed in such claims as seem utterly impossible in the mouth of mere man. He claimed completely to consummate the old religion, given of God. He claimed authority to criticize and to correct the ancient and living oracles of God: He claimed from such as would be His disciples the most stupendous sacrifices and unquestioning obedience unto death. He claims the character of final and universal Judge, coming with all His holy angels to sit upon the throne of glory, dispensing eternal punishments and imperishable rewards. He is conscious of a unique relation to God and a unique relation to mankind. He is

not conscious of having by any sin come short of the glory of God.

This is the fundamental thing in Christian theology—the testimony of Jesus to Himself. *Believe also in me* is the foundation of Christian faith. *Follow me* is the call to Christian discipleship. *Lovest thou me?* is the inspiration of all Christian endeavour.

It may be said that historically we can never get back to the self-consciousness of Jesus, and never be certain of His witness to Himself. We can carry back the line of Christian faith straight to the first disciples, but not beyond them to Jesus Himself. Let it be so. Then “beyond the whole chain, He stands as the power which first made this form of faith and life possible.”¹

After all, we have the actual impression made by Jesus not merely upon His contemporaries, but upon His closest disciples: “and nearer to the facts than the impression they make, we can never get. In any case, it is certain that the source of Gospels and Epistles is the actual life of a Society that realized more vividly perhaps than they have ever been realized since the experiences in explanation of which Christian doctrines were formed.”²

The Apostles certainly put Jesus in the forefront of their preaching: not merely nor mainly what He said, nor even what He did—but what He was. We could not wish for a clearer or more cogent statement on this subject than is to be found in the deeply interesting essay on the ethical significance of Christian doctrines which occurs at the close of the

¹ Horton, *Place and Person of Jesus Christ*, 59.

² *Cambridge Theological Essays*, 550.

Cambridge Theological Essays. The schools that have grown up round the great thinkers and teachers of mankind have naturally accepted, on the authority of one they revered, those things to which they could not have themselves attained. It was enough that the Master had said so. "The *αὐτὸς ἔφα* of the disciples of one of the earliest masters represents the natural tendency of the schools, but Jesus was not content to win acceptance of this kind for His sayings. It was not to His words but to Himself that He claimed allegiance. And His earliest followers with a true perception of the facts went forth to proclaim not *αὐτὸς ἔφα* but *αὐτός*—not what He said, but what He was."¹

But may not the Apostles have misconceived and misinterpreted the situation? Christ preached the kingdom: the Apostles preached the Christ. Harnack appears to concede the inevitability of this modification, yet characterizes the change as "a displacement, and in some sense a dispossession."² What shall we say to this?

What was the legacy that Jesus left? Was it only the doctrine of Divine Fatherhood? supported by His own powerful and prophetic personality? Was it a doctrine rather than a deed, a principle rather than a person? Such at any rate was not the view of the first believers, of those, that is, to whom He left His legacy, whatever it might be.

But it is argued, *litera scripta manet*: and though the Synoptists doubtless share the view of their generation, they cannot conceal certain words of

¹ *Cambridge Theological Essays*, 539.

² Harnack, *History of Dogma*, i.

Jesus which refuse to conform to the requirements of a later age.

What, then, of these words of Jesus? Must we not regard them as faithful expressions of His self-consciousness? Faithful, yes; but final, no. For these words of His, though the expression of His real self, are but the expression of His unfinished self. "His work was not half done till He died. Why insulate the words whose direct reference was but to an incomplete situation?"¹ Jesus was not yet glorified, the Spirit not yet given. "It was only after His death that the full truth could be told, because only then did the full truth exist. His death was its creation. Only in the completion of the Cross did Christ become the object of Gospel preaching, because only there was He perfected as Redeemer. It was not till then that the disciples came to worship Him.

"His death gives us the command of the whole Christ as He is not given us by His life or His Words. He was perfected only in the conquest of death, and only in that consummation do we see Him clear and whole."²

The Synoptic gospels are but an Apostolic product, the record of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach. Why should they be so completely detached from those other Apostolic products, telling us of those things of Christ which the Spirit of Christ took and showed to the Church. In them we can learn such things as Christ *continued* to do and to teach *after* the day on which He was taken up; in them we have the commentary of the completed

¹ Horton, *op. cit.* 118.

² *Ibid.* 120.

Christ on His own words and works that were wrought and taught upon the earth.

The same question is discussed by Kaftan, who returns with an important modification substantially the same answer. For with slightly but rightly different emphasis He lays special stress on the resurrection rather than the Cross. The Lord's death had given the death-blow also to those false and narrow Messianic expectations which His life and teaching had been powerless to dispel. The Apostles were called to preach the gospel as witnesses to the resurrection. That great event had revealed the real character and nature of their Lord. He had proclaimed the Kingdom appearing in and with Himself ; not otherwise did the Apostles see in and with the resurrection the Kingdom coming in power. Thus the proclamation of the Kingdom becomes in their mouths the preaching of the revealed and risen Christ. The King takes the place of the Kingdom, but underneath the difference of language there is substantial harmony of thought, for Christ is to believers all and more than all that the Kingdom could ever be or give.¹

Such is Kaftan's convincing and comprehensive contribution to the study of this particular problem ; a sensible and satisfying answer to Harnack's theory of displacement and dispossession.

Jesus, then, Himself, and He crucified, was the sum and substance of the Apostolic preaching. In Him and through Him, God was revealed reconciling the world unto Himself. We must now, in briefest

¹ Kaftan, *Das Wesen des Christenthums*, 246-262 ; cf. the present writer's *Faith and Fact*, 154-155.

outline, indicate the manner in which the Apostles sought to interpret their experience of Jesus as having for them this unique religious value. The question was approached from many standpoints, and different, though by no means mutually exclusive, answers were suggested. It is hardly quite fair to classify the answers in accordance with the cosmological or soteriological interests of the writers; for it is an unquestioned fact that in all the New Testament writers both their experience of Christ and their interpretation of that experience are predominantly religious. It may, however, be possible to distinguish, with Ritschl, two main types of presentation, as Christianity is conceived in the light of perfect redemption or final revelation.

a. Christ is the Lord. This was *the* truth that the Spirit taught the Church. No man can say Jesus is Lord, save by the Holy Spirit.¹

This title had a threefold significance. In the first place it emphasized the relation of all Christians to the object of their faith. He was the Master of their lives: and believers were His bond-servants.² Not the pleasing of men,³ still less the pleasing of self,⁴ but "unto the Lord" was the controlling and constraining motive of all they thought or spoke, all they did or desired to do.⁵ Jesus was their Lord, because He had bought them with a price, and they belonged to Him, soul and body.⁶

Secondly, the name was expressive of His heavenly exaltation. This was the Name that God gave Him when He set Him in sovereign supremacy above

¹ I Cor. xii. 3.

² Eph. vi. 7-9, Col. ii. 24.

³ Eph. vi. 6.

⁴ Rom. xv. 1-3.

⁵ Col. iii. 17.

⁶ I Cor. vii. 23.

every principality and power that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father.¹ In all things, "in the spiritual order as in the natural, in the Church as in the world,"² He was the pre-eminence, the first-born of all creation,³ and the first-born from the dead.⁴

Thirdly, the Lordship of Christ is connected with quite another circle of ideas. To every Jew, to everyone in fact who had the least acquaintance with the sacred Scriptures, the title Lord meant nothing less than Jehovah, God of Israel, graciously entering into covenant with His people, long-suffering and of great goodness, but none the less the high and holy one, inhabiting eternity, the righteous judge of all the earth. There is no more extraordinary phenomenon in the whole history of religion than the silence and simplicity with which the Apostles transferred to Jesus the language of the ancient Scriptures concerning Jehovah, the Lord, God of Israel and of heaven and earth. So calm and so certain was their conviction that, in Jesus, God had Himself visited and redeemed His people that, with unanimity the more impressive because so obviously undesigned, they came to make this revolutionary and stupendous assumption that the names of Jesus and Jehovah, if not to be identified, might yet be interchanged in all passages relating to the redemption of God's people. So clear was their confidence in the divinity of Christ, their Lord and ours.

β. Christ is the Word. Jesus had declared John to be a prophet and more than a prophet. What,

¹ Phil. ii. 11.

² Lightfoot, *Colossians*, 156.

³ Col. i. 15.

⁴ Col. i. 18.

then, was Jesus Himself. Some said, as one of the prophets; others, that prophet: but that was not the Apostolic answer. In what relation, then, did He stand to those who in past generations had spoken, as the Spirit moved them, of the great things of God. Christians never denied the reality or value, though they were none the less quickly conscious of the imperfection and fragmentariness, of these former revelations. They were as clearly convinced that in contrast to those provisional promises and prophecies Christ had come with a supreme and final revelation of the Father. "God who hath indeed in olden time spoken to the fathers in the prophets, hath in these latter days spoken to us in a Son."¹ "No man hath seen God at any time; God that is only begotten in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."²

A term was still wanted to express the relation of Christ to these former teachers: a term which would express at once the uniqueness of Christ's truth and teaching, and would yet, while recognizing the provisional, not deny the providential character of those former revelations. It was reserved for St. John to see and to seize that which would serve as the "*mot de la situation*," a word already coined and current, to give expression to the Christian consciousness of the absoluteness and supremacy of the revelation in Jesus Christ. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

The Word of God—God, that is, revealing Himself to men—a term known to the sacred Scriptures

¹ Heb. i. 1.

² John i. 18.

no less than to the Philonic philosophy. And it was from the former, not from the latter, that the author of the fourth Gospel derived his doctrine and his language. The words of Harnack are worthy of being well pondered: "The reference to Philo and Hellenism is by no means sufficient here, as it does not satisfactorily explain even one of the external aspects of the problem. The elements operative in Johannine theology were not Greek theologoumena. Even the Logos has little more in common with that of Philo than the name, and the mention of it at the beginning of the book is a mystery, not the solution of one."¹

The Word, then, according to St. John, has ever been among men the light and life of every soul that He has made—illuminating and leading all men at all times towards the truth, at last shining forth in undimmed splendour for those that had eyes to see, and hearts to feel, the fulness of grace and truth and glory manifest in the Incarnate Christ.

It may be objected that we have here a heavenly not a historical figure: that when adequate allowance has been made for individual idiosyncrasies there can be discovered no trace of the actual Jesus of Nazareth, but only the idealized portrait of a divine Christ. But the answer to such an objection is simple and sufficient. It is true that the early Church was mainly occupied with the thought of a risen and returning Christ, but the whole strength of the Johannine and Pauline Christology lay in the

¹ *History of Dogma* (E.T.), i. 97.

indisputable identification of the Exalted One with Him who had been found in fashion as a man.

1. Christ the Lord. But He that ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower region of earth? It was because He had been faithful unto death that God made this same Jesus to be Christ and Lord. It was on the very ground of His utter humiliation and obedience to the end that God hath also highly exalted Him. The whole system of Pauline theology is constructed on the basis that He who is exalted above all heavens was born of a woman, suffered for man, and as man died for our sins, and rose for our justification.

2. Christ the Word—riding at the head of the heavenly armies, yet robed in a raiment dipped in blood. For the Lamb that shares the Eternal Throne and receives the adoration of earth and heaven still bears the marks as it had been slain. The Johannine Christology is as emphatic as the Pauline on this point. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, . . . and the Word was made flesh." Thus does the ideal personification of the philosophers become the historical personality of St. John. And in the Epistles he enforces the uttermost importance of this real and actual Incarnation. "Whosoever confesseth not Jesus Christ come in the flesh is antichrist."

If further evidence were needed as to the importance attached in the N.T. to the historicity of Jesus Christ, abundant testimony is forthcoming. In two directions it is particularly prominent.

1. The very title of *Christ* shows that we are

dealing with the claims of an actual person. The Messianic disputes of the first (and second) centuries show that we are dealing with one whose life and teaching, birth and death, were carefully considered, both by way of criticizing and of establishing the correspondence between an actual historical person and the ideal figure of prophetic expectation. That such criticism and comparison may have led largely to idealistic interpretations, we are not concerned to deny. But either contrast or correspondence would have been meaningless had not the fact of Jesus formed the starting point and subject matter of all such controversies, which else had been impossible.

2. The Gospels were compiled for no other purpose than to preserve the portrait of the historical Jesus. The question now before us is not their genuineness and historicity, but the purpose of their compilation, and the attitude of the early Church towards those "narratives of the things accomplished among us." Of the purpose of their drawing up, there is no room for divergence of opinion. It was that those who had learned concerning Jesus from tradition might have the certainty of that wherein they had been instructed. There can be as little doubt concerning their immediate acceptance by the Church. The Gospels, that is, the accounts of the Lord's earthly life, were *written and received* by men who believed in the identity of Jesus of Nazareth with the exalted Christ, to whom the epistles and their own experience bore witness. And these first believers seem to have been supremely unconscious of anything to suggest that there was the least line of cleavage

between the historical Christ, of whose earthly life the Gospels gave accurate account, and the Divine Saviour, whose heavenly power was known through all the Churches by the Spirit.

Such in barest, briefest outline is the Apostolic attitude to Jesus Christ. We have not alluded to those further attributes of pre-existence and sinlessness which appear impartially in each of the two types of theology to which we have drawn special attention. It is enough to point out that Christians could not think of God without thinking of Christ; that to them He was not less than God, the perfect revealer of the Father, and the perfect Redeemer of mankind; that they expressed their thoughts concerning Him in terms such as the Son of God, the Saviour of men, the Image of God, the Logos of God, the Light of men and the Life of men—Christ the Lord and Christ the Word, made man for us in Jesus of Nazareth, who was slain but is alive for evermore. The question now remains how far the second century witnessed, if it did not welcome, that great and grievous transformation of the religion of Jesus into a system of theology based on Greek metaphysics, from which sprang the faith of the Catholic Church.

In trying to determine what the Apologists actually accomplished or attempted to achieve, certain considerations must be kept constantly in mind.

1. The first thing to be remembered is that the Apologies are written with a definite and specific aim, and it is impossible to discover from those

writings, taken by themselves, the exact extent of their Christian faith or knowledge. Thus, how great a contrast is afforded between the *Apology* of Tertullian and his anti-gnostic writings. A fragment of Justin, preserved by Irenaeus, suggests that the former was the original author of the theory of the recapitulation of all things in Christ—a doctrine to which there is no allusion in his extant writings.

2. And then, secondly, we must remember what was the definite aim, in view of which the Apologies were written. It was with a view to conciliating contemporary culture. Engaged in such a task, they were bound to put forward aspects of the case to which they could hope response would be quick and natural. "Their business was to insist on the affinities between Christianity and Greek thought, to suggest the help which the Greek mind might receive from Christian teaching, but not to insist on what might seem alien and opposed."¹

3. The third thing that may be said is this. The Apostles wrote to Christians and for Christians; the Apologists wrote to pagans and for pagans, and to pagans often bitterly hostile. It was not merely a case of Christian thought coming into contact or collision with contemporary culture, but Christians pleading for their lives from men who were only too ready to refuse them so much as a hearing. It was necessary for the Apologists not only to be conciliatory, but discreet as well. Though Justin, with his eager and engaging hopefulness, held back as little as possible, there were mysteries of the faith which it was not meet to unfold before unbelievers.

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¹ Rainy, *Old Catholic Church*, 91.

116 REVELATION OF THE SON OF GOD

What, then, did the Apologists put forward as the claims of Christ upon mankind?

1. They certainly insisted upon the historical character of the Christian religion. From the beginning of the second century men preached "Jesus Christ of the race of David, Son of Mary (and Son of God¹) who was truly born and ate and drank, was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate, was truly crucified and died in the sight of those in heaven and those on earth and those under the earth: who moreover was truly raised from the dead."² Christians knew that their religion was nothing if not historical. The earliest of the Apologists bear witness to this. For the Christians reckon the beginning of their race from Jesus Christ; and He is confessed in the Holy Ghost to be the Son of God come down from heaven for man's salvation; and being born of a holy (Syr. and Arm. versions read *Hebrew* for *holy*) Virgin without human seed, and without all defilement, took flesh upon Him, and was manifest unto men... and on the Cross He tasted death of His own will according to a mighty mystery, and after three days He came to life again and ascended into heaven."³

Justin tells us that "demons were exorcised in the Name of the Son of God, the First-born of all creatures, who was born of a virgin and suffered as man, who was crucified by the Jewish nation under Pontius Pilate, who died and rose from the dead and ascended up into heaven."⁴

In considering the importance attached to the historical character of the Christian revelation in the

¹ Ignatius, *Eph.* 7.

² Ignatius, *Trall.* 9.

³ Aristides (Greek Version), 15.

⁴ Justin, *Dialogue*, 85.

Apostolic age, allusion was made to the compilation and position of the Gospels, and to the Messianic controversies. It may be mentioned that in the second century those two considerations were equally decisive. Justin's minute and multitudinous coincidences with the Synoptic account of our Lord's life and ministry, prove that "his knowledge of the Gospel history was derived from a tradition which they had moulded and controlled, if not from habitual and exclusive use of the books themselves."¹ The attitude of Justin was no individual idiosyncrasy, but that of the whole Church of his day : for he appeals repeatedly to "the memoirs of the Apostles and those that followed them,"² and he tells us that these memoirs, "which are called Gospels," were read together with the prophetical writings in the sacred service of the Church. If the heathen will not read the Christian Gospels, then Justin bids them study their own official documents, the returns of Quirinius,³ and the acts of Pilate,⁴ whereby the most sceptical can be convinced as to the actual personality of Jesus, and the historical character of His religion.

As to the Messianic prophecies, the controversy concerning their correct interpretation occupied the forefront of Justin's energetic and exhaustive labours. However mistaken or even perverse the exegesis may at times become, the whole point of the comparison is the actual correspondence of certain definite historical events with the predictions of the prophets. Indeed, the more far-fetched that some of them may

¹ Westcott, *Canon of N. T.* 168.

² Cf. *Apol.* i. 33, 66, 67 ; *Dial.* 103, 105, 106.

³ *Apol.* i. 34.

⁴ *Ibid.* 35.

appear, the more certain may we be that the fact suggested the fulfilment, not the prophecy the fact. For had there been any tendency to find or fashion facts in order that prophecy might be fulfilled, we should have had correspondences far more close and more complete. In many cases only the most vivid and violent interpretation can avail to trace the resemblance between the prophecy and its fulfilment. The inventive imagination would never have left things in such obscurity. On the other hand, taking the facts for granted, and searching the Old Testament through with eagle eyes to find some parallel or some prediction, however faint or feeble, which *might* be construed into a prophecy thus fulfilled, a curious and devout Christian would be prepared to find a host of strange correspondences in the most unlikely places. But such an argument from prophecy is in reality an application of Scripture to illustrate facts which have already produced a firm conviction not only as to their reality but as to their unique importance also. Viewed in this light, it is interesting to note what Justin finds in prophecy. It was foretold that "Jesus, our Christ, should be born of a Virgin, and be made man, and heal every disease and infirmity, and raise the dead, and should be envied and unrecognized and be crucified, and should die and rise again, and ascend into heaven, and both be called and be the Son of God, and that certain men sent by Him should preach these things to every race of men, and that they of the Gentiles should believe on Him the most."¹ In fact, the historic Christ was the subject of prophecy.

¹ Justin, *Apol.* i. 31.

2. These prophets came to utter those wonderful predictions not by their own power. They were "prophets of God," and "through them the prophetic Spirit proclaimed the things that should come to pass."¹ Sometimes the prophets speak in their own persons; at other times in the person of the Father and Lord of all, or again in the person of Christ, or again in the person of the prophetic Spirit. There is but one author, many actors of this Divine drama. And the author is the Divine Logos. The Word of God speaks through all the characters of this strange and splendid scene.²

But did the prophets alone prepare the way for Christ's coming? No, is Justin's decided answer: Christ left Himself not without witness in the minds of men. Philosophy is an unconscious prophecy. But if men could thus attain to truth, what need was there for any special revelation such as the incarnation of the Son of God implied? If men can be unconscious Christians without Christ, then, it has been objected, reason has taken the place of revelation, and the Christian religion is not really needed after all. But Justin has his answer ready. First of all, they were *not* Christians without Christ. It matters not whether they were among the heroes of Hebrew history (Abraham and Ananias, and many others), or whether such as Socrates and Heraclitus and those like unto them,—all who lived well and nobly were true Christians, though they were branded

¹ Justin, *Apol.* i. 31.

² *Ibid.* 36. Justin gives instances: 37, the Father speaks, Is. i. 3, 11-15, lxvi. 1, lviii. 6 ff.; 38, the Son speaks, Is. lxxv. 2, Is. i. 6-8, Ps. xxii. 16, 18; 39, the Spirit speaks, Is. ii. 3, etc.

as atheists, and though Christ had not been born. They were true Christians, for they lived their lives with the Divine Logos, and met death without terror or trembling.¹ All noble things and thoughts of philosophers and legislators are due to the Divine Logos dwelling within them all.² Many were Christians before Christ, but none without Christ.

"Many man for Cristes love was martired in Romaine
Er any Cristendom was known there, or any cros honoured."

Are we to apologise for the broad-minded generosity of the second century Apologists, or can we admit and admire their profound and penetrating recognition of the Divine preparation of paganism for the Gospel? Tertullian and Tatian and Theophilus renounce all terms with heathenism, but Justin heads the Greek theologians in not merely insisting on the historical continuity of revelation, but in constructing a philosophy of history. As his occasional and even egregious blunders in his interpretation of Scripture do not invalidate his main conclusion, so there is no reason why any errors in the expression of his philosophical theory should blind us either to its genuine generosity or to its substantial truth.

But though it may be conceded that the ancient wisdom of Hellas, so far as it was reasonable and true, was not the unassisted product of the human intelligence, but due to the operation of that spark or, to use Justin's language, seed of Divine reason planted in the minds of men, the question still remains why should there be a yet further revelation? Here we come to the second part of Justin's answer.

¹ *Apol.* i. 46.

² *Apol.* ii. 8-10.

Unconscious Christianity is not enough. Men must come consciously to Christ if they would taste the freedom of His truth. The philosophers had but partial glimpses of beauty and truth, and had never been able to surrender themselves wholly to the power of goodness. So the Stoic theory will not stand examination, and a special revelation is needed after all. For "reason is clogged with unreasonableness," and the certainty and clearness of knowledge cannot come from any "seed of the Logos," but only from the Logos Christ in all power and plenitude of perfect self-revelation. Moreover the daemons, those personified powers of sense and of all evil, will not surrender their shameful sway that man's natural endowment of reason has proved too weak to resist. So, to destroy doubt and the daemons, the Logos Himself was manifested, that man might once more be free from all falsehood and foulness.

The identification of the Logos with the Incarnate Christ leads Justin to some bold speculations; but these cannot with justice be credited either to his Stoic or Platonic inclinations. For he has now passed out of the range of contemporary philosophy, which even where it approximated to a conception of a mediator between God and man, rejected altogether the idea of an incarnation as too utterly material and gross.¹ Justin's difficulties rise from Scripture, "the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Justin, of course, felt himself obliged to maintain the monotheism of the Christian faith. He had to preserve the unity and unchangeableness of the Eternal and Invisible God, who yet revealed

¹ Harnack, *History of Dogma*, ii. 184.

Himself in creation, in reason, in prophecy, in Jesus. He had to prove the Divinity of the Logos, and at the same time His distinctness from the Father. Justin was a pioneer, and it was easy to make mistakes. That the Word is Divine, Justin proves from Scripture,¹ but this is only the beginning of difficulties. Justin suggests some interesting analogies to illustrate distinctness without division—thought from thought, and fire from flame.² He is begotten of the substance of the Father, by the Father's might and will.³ He is thus numerically distinct,⁴ and may be called a second God and Lord.⁵ He is the Son of God in a unique sense, but second and subordinate to the Father.⁶ It was He that appeared in the Old Testament theophanies to patriarchs and prophets.⁷

Such is Justin's doctrine of *Christ the Word*. That he used such culture as was at his command to give intelligible expression to his Christian beliefs need not be denied or regretted. Men must think about their religion, and also try to find some point of contact between their theology and contemporary thought. Every intelligent religion must ultimately yield to pressure from without or within to give some intelligible account of itself, and "in the second century Christianity was beginning to respond to this inevitable call."

But we must remember that Justin did not invent either the term or the idea of Logos as applied to Christ, and I cannot see that his use of the term goes beyond its sense and significance in the Fourth

¹ *Dial.* 61.

² *Ibid.* 61.

³ *Ibid.* 128.

⁴ *Ibid.* 128.

⁵ *Ibid.* 56.

⁶ *Apol.* i. 13, ii. 6.

⁷ *Apol.* i. 63; *Dial.* 58, 127.

Gospel. "With the exception of a few Stoical flourishes and embellishments, themselves suggested by the preface of St. John, Justin's theology is entirely Biblical. Everything that he says is based upon some passage of Scripture: if there are inferences and interpretations, they are based upon Christian documents and drawn by Christian logic." The efforts of the Apologists to construct a coherent and systematic account of Christian facts were entirely praiseworthy, "unless it should appear that pagan logic not only pointed out the gaps in their system but actually supplied the material for filling this up, and this does not appear to have been the case."¹

3. *Christ the Lord and Christ the Word.* In discussing the Apologists we inverted this order, for there can be no doubt that in their writings the idea of revelation holds the foremost place. This does not by any means represent their own closest convictions. It arose from the necessities of the case. When Christians wrote to Christians, the thought of redemption was naturally uppermost. Ignatius exults in "the blood of God." "The Impassible suffered for our sake, endured in all ways for our sake."² We are as it were nailed on the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ in flesh and in spirit, and firmly grounded in love in the Blood of Christ.³

Clement begs the Corinthians to fix their eyes on the blood of Christ, and understand how precious it is unto His Father, because being shed for our salvation it won for the whole world the grace of repentance. Justin knows the meaning of such

¹ Bigg, *Origins of Christianity*, 334.

² *Ad Polyc.* 3.

³ *Ad Smyrn.* 1.

language. "For Christ is our passover, that was slain for us, and as the blood of the passover rescued those in bondage out of Egypt, so the blood of Christ shall rescue believers from death.... And Rahab's scarlet thread is a symbol of the blood of Christ, whereby they that were of old impure and unrighteous are saved from all the nations, receiving remission of their sins, and sinning no more."¹ Justin has felt for himself the connexion between the sinner's forgiveness and the Saviour's Passion. "O speak no word of evil, my brothers, against that Crucified One; make ye not merry over the stripes of Him by which all may be healed, even as we also have been healed."² He knows the mystery of the serpent lifted in the wilderness, that all might look to the Crucified and live;³ for Christ by the Father's counsel hath borne our curse, and by His stripes the whole race of men is healed, and our hope is hanged on the Cross whereon hangs the Christ.⁴ The goodness and loving-kindness of God and His immeasurable richness counteth the man that repenteth for His sins as righteous and sinless.⁵ No tongue can tell the power and wonder of the Cross of Christ.⁶

Justin certainly proclaims Christ and Him Crucified. But he has his own way of regarding redemption. It is the daemons that hold the world and all mankind in thrall. No one has yet availed to break their power. So men lived their half lives in the shadows, impure and blind. Then came Christ to teach men the truth and free them for ever from

¹ Justin, *Dial.* iii.

² *Ibid.* 137.

³ *Ibid.* 91, 94.

⁴ *Ibid.* 95, 96.

⁵ *Ibid.* 47.

⁶ *Ibid.* 86, 90, 91, 111; *Apol.* i. 55.

those evil enemies. But they did Him to death, as Socrates was slain aforetime, together with others who had dared to resist their power. So that there would have been once more an end of revelation and redemption had not the Saviour risen in triumph from the tomb, and in His victorious might swept His Spirit through the earth, freeing men from their foul fetters, and bidding the blind look up and see. To His risen power the daemons still are subject, and by Him are continually cast out: so that over all the world men are delivered from this haunting and demoralising dread, and can praise the Lord who consented to die that He might vanquish the daemons in their darkest and most desperate stronghold.

Christians are conscious that they owe their life and liberty to Christ: He is henceforth the Lord of their life. To His service they dedicate themselves. His fair precepts they endeavour to observe, for He only teaches such things as will renew and reinvigorate the human race,¹ and will give us good hope to receive such things as He has promised.² The life to which Christians are called is on a moral level which pagan philosophers and priests would not have dared to suggest to their disciples that to which "an innumerable multitude" of humble believers have attained.³ Justin shows no slight skill in selecting such precepts of the Lord as would most move his audience with a sense of their impressive novelty. But, after all, the newness was not found in the precepts, but felt in the power which made the

¹ Justin, *Apol.* i. 23, ἐπ' ἀλλαγῇ καὶ ἐπαναγωγῇ.

² *Ibid.* 14.

³ *Ibid.* 14-16.

precepts possible. That was the new thing. The Apologists are so often accused of showing a scant appreciation of their religion, of its richness and its resources. Proclaiming Christianity as old as creation, they forgot, we are told, its distinctive promises and prerogatives. They claimed the suffrage of the world, but neutralized the significance of the religion for which they advanced so high a claim. That is the charge. It assumes that the Apologists have told the whole story, when the half thereof was even but barely told. What was it that was new in the teaching of Christ Himself? "In the actual principles and rules of conduct, which saying after saying, parable after parable, and actions alike enumerate, there is very little that is new. Jesus was not the first to proclaim the need of control of thought, desire, imagination, will. He was not the first to insist on truthfulness and purity of heart as the test of truthfulness and purity in act. The supreme if not the only novelty in His ethical teaching is to be found not in the contents of it, but in the basis which He gives it..."¹ What is this? A new teaching? asked the crowds. A new teaching, not because it taught new things, but because it taught in a new way, with authority and not as do the Scribes.

Justin felt this, and so did those for whom he wrote. He makes no division between doctrine and ethics. He is as ready to commend the ethical fruit as evidence of the uncorruptness of the tree as to command obedience to the moral law of Christianity by referring to the authority of its divine Teacher. "He assumes that the excellence of the ethical

¹ *Cambridge Theological Essays*, 538.

principles which he recounts will be admitted by all: he is concerned to indicate with regard to the most characteristic points that for Christians their validity and authority are intimately connected with the beliefs they hold about Jesus Himself.”¹

Jesus Himself, that was the new and central thing. Jesus, Himself the standard of Life. And the Spirit of Jesus, the Renewer and Giver of Life. That was the salient and specific feature of the Christian revelation for the Apologists as it was for the Apostles before them.

Inadequately as the Apologists may have expressed in their writings this new and joyful experience, yet the whole feeling of the writers means far more than they have written. “The writers are filled with the sense of a new beginning set for man, and for each man, in Christ’s religion. Just as in the final judgement, so resolutely asserted by them all, the justice is signalized which upholds moral distinctions and gives to the world a moral constitution; so in the Incarnation, the grace which cares for men and knows no limits to its condescension for their sake, the Love that was set on saving was felt though hardly at all explained. It was something *there* which made all new and rendered it so hopeful, obligatory and inspiring to forsake all and follow Christ.”²

It is this which saves their practical morality from sheer moralism. There is an irruption of Divine grace which spoils the hardness and fastness of it. It baptizes their moral code in its pure power. The early Christians could no doubt have told us *how*,

¹ *Cambridge Theological Essays*, 540.

² Rainy, *op. cit.* 91.

but could not have told us *why*, their morality differed from the moral standards of the people round about them. "But when morality comes into a world of love and takes relation to the grace of Him who took flesh and died for us, it is unawares transformed, inspired and glorified."

Justin was proud to call himself a philosopher, and Eusebius gave him his title "the lover of the true philosophy." But the Church with surer instinct called him not Justin the philosopher, but Justin Martyr, not the lover of wisdom, but the witness of Christ, that loved not his life (but His Lord) unto death.

Thus let us take leave of the Apologists. Is there, after all, so vast a chasm fixed between them and the Apostles of the Lord? Our enquiry—very long, yet far too greatly limited—will have revealed no such fundamental cleavage as the sharp and subtle criticism prefixed to this lecture would lead us to expect. They proclaimed the historical Jesus of Nazareth, and Him they worshipped as Christ the Word and Christ the Lord. There was no separation or severance between these three conceptions, the Christ of History, the Christ of Reason, the Christ of Experience. They knew that philosophy was powerless to save—why else had they turned Christian? They knew also that the past without the present was of small account: they knew also that an irrational or unintelligible faith made experience not sacred but senseless. So they started to solve the great problem to which we are still trying to find a final and satisfying solution. But the world is the better for the attempted answer of those early

thinkers, for their persistent optimism, for their faithful courage and courageous faith, most of all, perhaps, because they have shown us where the answer must be found—for they believed not in words of men's wisdom, but in the goodness and kindness and immeasurable riches of the Fountain of all Wisdom and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

IV

CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIAN CREEDS

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IV

CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIAN CREEDS

“JESUS asked them saying, What think ye of the Christ?
Whose Son is He?”

MATT. xxii. 41, 42.

“FIRM FOUNDATIONS” is the general title by which I have ventured to describe these lectures.¹ In the midst of universal and profound unsettlement, there rises before the mind with pathetic insistence the picture of that house whereon the waves did beat and the winds did blow, yet it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.

It is contained in the Scriptures that the Church of Christ is built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets. No doubt the prophets of the New Dispensation are intended, but it is a matter of little moment, for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of all prophecy, both new and old. These, then, are the foundations of the Christian Church; those holy men who, moved by God, spake of God,—the prophets who ever since the world began have prepared the way of the Lord as He came to take possession of

¹This was the title under which the lectures were announced and delivered at Cambridge.

His people's hearts ; and those chosen witnesses who called by Christ followed Christ,—the Apostles who, testifying to that which they had both heard and seen, went forth to proclaim the marvellous message of a redeeming and a risen God. On these the Church is built. The insight of the prophets agreeth with the interpretation of the Apostles, and both alike point to Him that is Servant and Son and Saviour.

These are the foundations, though not the founders of the faith wherein we stand, whereby we also may be saved. And He that set them in the Church, and in the beginning did all things well, knew of these foundations that they were well and truly laid. For He set them not upon the shifting sands, but laid them in the living rock—and that Rock was Christ.

Into that rock they grew till they were part of it, and on that rock the Church was built. Men, not walls, are the best defences of a city: and the Saviour's Church is a Church of souls, not of stones. The dogma of Christ's divinity is dead without the conscious witness of men who know themselves redeemed by the Son of God. Not on the confession in the abstract, but on the confession thus made by confessors of this central truth, Christ wills to build His Church ; for such are worthy to become part of their own confession, *πέτροι* in that *πετρά*, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail.

"Whom say ye that I am?" That was the question (and He the questioner) that elicited the rock-confession on which the Church is built. And

to that question Christ claims an answer which must, as far as we can make it so, be both complete and clear. We have no more right to leave (as has been suggested) the question "open and unanswered" than to return "an ambiguous or evasive answer."¹ For what purpose has He been training and teaching us so long, save that, when He asks, we shall answer?

Confessing Christ as our Lord and God, we know that we may dwell securely, for we are founded upon a rock. It is this which makes revelation a reality—for flesh and blood has not, and could not ever have, revealed this tremendous truth, but the Heavenly Father. It is this which makes the moral miracle greater than any material marvels, for knowing our own weakness and knowing the strength of the enemy, how is it that walking along the slippery paths our footsteps do not slide? Is it not that He hath set my feet upon the rock and ordered my goings? Is it not that having accomplished nothing in my own strength I can then accomplish all things when I own myself most weak, and in my weakness rely on His strength who hath set me up upon the Rock that is higher than I? It is this that gives to prophecy coherence, and to Apostolic testimony and tradition constancy—for with this key we unlock golden doors, and all hidden treasures are for our delight and our disposing.² Reason and revelation, change of character and miracles that manifest the Divine love, Bible and Church, history and experience—all are ours, for we are Christ's, and Christ to us is God's, and God.

¹ Denney, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 410.

² Col. ii. 3.

On this confession of Christ's divinity the Church of Christ is founded. This was recognized by most from the first, but the partial recognition of a thing does not suffice to secure its universal realization. Strange doctrines pretending to explain, proceeded to explain away much that the Christian consciousness knew could never be surrendered without making shipwreck of the faith. Meanwhile the unwary were often entangled, if not ensnared, by plausible controversialists, and simple souls were at the mercy of subtle speculations. It became necessary to contend earnestly for the faith, once for all delivered to the saints. But if the faith were to be defended, it must first be defined. This must not be taken as implying any desire for intellectual definition. For centuries the Church was more anxious to prevent than to promote definitions of this nature. It was only when the multitude of misinterpretations threatened to pass over her like an overflowing scourge, that the Church was reluctantly driven to exclude error by interpreting, on her own account, the formularies of her faith. When we speak of the early "definition" of the faith, we mean that under the pressure of heretical controversy, it became imperatively necessary to draw up some simple statement of the faith whereby it might be known what was, and what was not, essential to the completeness of Christian belief. In this way the Apostolic Creed was gradually and almost unconsciously formed, to state clearly, concisely and comprehensively the Church's confession of the divinity of her Master, and her conviction that the Most High had in Him visited and redeemed His people.

There is little need to illustrate the connection of the Creeds with the second century. "The Catholic view of Jesus Christ is set forth in the Creeds. Ever since the end of the second century, and perhaps earlier, persons on being received into the Christian Church in baptism have been asked to declare their Christian belief in a form of words not very unlike the so-called Apostles' Creed."¹ Harnack goes further. "The confession of God the Father Almighty, of Christ as the Lord and Son of God, and of the Holy Spirit, was at a very early period in the communities united with a short proclamation of the history of Jesus. The confession thus conceived had not everywhere obtained a fixed definite expression in the first century. . . . It is highly probable, however, that a short confession was definitely formulated in the Roman Community before the middle of the second century, expressing belief in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, embracing also the most important facts in the history of Jesus, and mentioning the Holy Church, as well as the two great blessings of Christianity, the forgiveness of sins and the resurrection of the dead."²

In his most interesting introduction to the *Apology* of Aristides, Dr. Rendel Harris expresses his conviction that in the time of Aristides the Church already had a symbol of the faith, and that a good many of its sentences can easily be reconstructed.³ Indeed, it is more than probable that a quarter of a century previous to this date the churches in Asia

¹ Burkitt, *Failure of Liberal Christianity*.

² Harnack, *History of Dogma*, i. 157.

³ *Apology of Aristides, Texts and Studies*, I. i. 25.

Minor treasured a *παραδοθεὶς λόγος*, not unlike the Roman symbol.¹

The last century and this have witnessed a determined attack upon the Creeds. Objection is taken to the large quantity of historical matter which they contain: but though the position of the historical element in the Christian religion suggests a most fascinating study, this lecture proposes to deal rather with the arguments commonly advanced against the Creeds as being metaphysical documents, straining the reason and conscience of modern men, and devoid of saving power. I make no apology for taking the Nicene as well as the Apostles' Creed into consideration, for few will be found to doubt or to dispute the inevitability of the former if once the Church considered it necessary to frame the latter.

It is admitted on every hand that the Church is founded on the confession of Christ's divinity. But, it is asked, is not this divinity adequately interpreted if we claim for Christ that He is the Son of God? Why divide men further by useless definitions? Why concern ourselves about a Creed when a simple statement of love and trust should be all-sufficient?

Such is the plea put forward with persuasive simplicity by Dr. Denney in the conclusion of his fine book on *Jesus and the Gospel*, yet it is to be noted that even he proposes a formula which is *intended to exclude* a broad-churchism which would give Christ another or a lower place than He has in the New Testament faith, and a modernism which declines to

¹This much may be inferred from the Epistles of Ignatius and Polycarp; cf. Harnack, *op. cit.* 157.

allow that Jesus could have been anything more than we ourselves.¹ The formula, however, that he puts forward for our acceptance,² would be perfectly acceptable to those broad churchmen and modernists to whose religious beliefs Dr. Denney is ready to deny the very name of Christian.

"Jesus, the Son of God." It was just because the Arians aforetime accepted this formula, and made it the basis of their disastrous interpretation, that the Church was compelled to guard the faith in such wise as to exclude error which, whatever it might call itself, in reality offered to the world "no Christianity at all in the only sense in which Christianity can be seen in the New Testament, in the only sense in which it is a religion answering to the mind of Christ about Himself."³

It is possible to be convinced with Dr. Denney that the Arian answer is quite unreal, and as convinced that the Athanasian answer explains nothing.⁴ On the other hand, one may hold with Harnack that Athanasius saved a conviction of faith, or with Professor Gwatkin that Athanasius "was clearly right and has been justified by history," and that "though the Nicene theology is still the greatest stumbling-block to Western belief, the step then taken was the most momentous in the entire history of Christian thought, for by it the dominant heathen conception of God was renounced as inconsistent with the historic facts of the Gospel."⁵

¹ Denney, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 381.

² *Ibid.* 398: "I believe in God through Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord and Saviour." Surely both modernists and the "broadest" churchmen could unite in assent to such a formula.

³ *Ibid.* 382.

⁴ *Ibid.* 403.

⁵ Gwatkin, *Studies of Arianism*, 43.

Arianism with its Christ not divine, nor yet truly human, "witnessing not to the love of God but to a gulf beyond the power of Almighty Love to close,"¹ made revelation a mockery, redemption an idle phrase. The Nicene theology condemned the attempt to disparage or deny the essential divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus made possible the belief in a real revelation and a real redemption which Arianism threatened. The statements of the Nicene Creed are approved by history as the safest and surest way of shutting out a series of speculations whose fundamentally anti-Christian character has been abundantly demonstrated.

Was, then, the victory only won in order that the victorious army might abandon the hard-fought field? Is not the Church entitled to remain in possession? Retreat would be interpreted as defeat, and crowds of adversaries would advance to the final and fatal occupation and overthrow of the central citadel of faith. It is idle to pretend that at this time of day the Christian Church has nothing to fear from Arianism.² The divinity of Christ is as real and living an issue to-day as sixteen centuries ago. It is *the* foundation of the Christian faith and the Christian Church, if we are to give any intelligible or definite meaning to the term Christian. Myriad attempts (and many masquerading under less discreditable and less easily distinguishable names) seek to accomplish what Arianism failed to effect—to reduce, that is, Christ to the level of the creature, whereby the ideas of Christian redemption

¹ Gwatkin, *Studies of Arianism*, 27.

² Cf. Gwatkin, *op. cit.* 43. "The main contest opened at Nicea is not ended yet, or like to end before the Lord Himself shall come to end it."

and Christian revelation would be subjected to ruthless and ruinous reinterpretation.

It is, further, an altogether mistaken view to denounce the definitions of the Creed as containing nothing that appeals to the Christian conscience or awakens any response in it. "To simplify the Creed by omitting everything which can be verified in experience, and then to expect men to unite in the purely metaphysical proposition that Christ is consubstantial with the Father"¹ is, of course, ridiculous as a perverse and foolish proposition. But who will say that the Nicene Creed is so singularly destitute of all that can be an object of knowledge or experience to believers, as this statement might lead us to suppose? The central purpose of the Creed is religious, not philosophical. It was *for us men and for our salvation* that the Very God of Very God came down from heaven, and was incarnate, and was crucified also and suffered under Pontius Pilate. It is, as these words show, in order to preserve the historical and Scriptural character of the Church's confession of faith, that those earlier statements were added, to the intent that all men who read or received the Gospel story of the Lord's earthly life might believe and know that in Jesus of Nazareth the Almighty had indeed visited and redeemed His people.

Such parts of the Creed as are metaphysical were added or admitted to the Creed in no philosophical interest, but to exclude a false philosophy which threatened to dominate the thought and teaching of the Church. The short and simple document pro-

¹ Denney, *op. cit.* 392.

posed by Eusebius—a creed of venerable antiquity, of Scriptural language and prudent evasions¹—commanded the assent of all, because it decided nothing. But the Council was right in its rejection: for a unanimity which left the Scriptural and historical Christ at the mercy of false philosophical speculation was not worthy of the Christian name. In defence of the historical revelation in Christ and the Scriptural interpretation of the same, the technical terms of philosophy were employed to overthrow a philosophy which would otherwise have overthrown the faith itself. There was no other means of effecting this emphatic and final exclusion of the evil thing.

Moreover, it should be noted that although these metaphysical discussions divided men in the ancient days, they really do so no longer. It is not owing to doctrinal definitions nor to theological statements that men are estranged from the faith or strain their consciences to retain their Church connection. A series of remarkable movements, both at home and abroad, serves to show the readiness of different communions to co-operate in work and worship on the basis of a common creed, such as the Apostolic or Nicene Confession. That which divides to-day is not difference of theological creeds, but diversity in ecclesiastical organization. In the Creeds, the Churches, on the whole, are at one.²

¹ Gwatkin, *Arianism*, 47-49.

² Reference may be made to the Free Church Catechism at home: to the standard of faith set forth by the Presbyterian Church in Japan: and to a most remarkable conference on unity held at Nairobi, where the representatives of a number of missionary societies embracing every variety of Protestant opinion were prepared to accept the Apostles' and the Nicene Creed as the basis of Church union. (See the *Report* of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference.)

Three further points demand and deserve consideration.

(1) The Creeds are considered the great bar to intellectual liberty. Now, in the intellectual no less than in the moral sphere, liberty is something more than license. It implies capacity for self-control and consideration for the corporate consciousness. The closing of a certain path because of the discovery that disaster and destruction lie that way is no aggressive act of tyranny, but rather the safeguarding of a reasonable liberty. The Church *has* discovered that her existence depends upon her right to worship and to witness to a Divine (not a deified) Christ. Less than that, she cannot consent to consider. It is no bar to progress to bar a road along which progress has been proved impossible. No one denies or disputes the right of the Church to amend or emend its formularies, if they should be shown to be incorrect or inadequate: but it must be remembered that "the Nicene formula marks a climax in the exaltation of Jesus. We cannot exalt Him above God. His godhead may be made more intelligible, but any doctrine that excludes the Nicene is another doctrine and not a more developed re-statement."¹ The Church cannot "contemplate with equanimity"² anything of the nature of a fresh and facile descent from *Deus* to *divinus*.

(2) The Nicene Creed is contrasted unfavourably with such a statement of belief as the Westminster Confession. The latter, it is said, "contains everything that is in the former, but this is the least

¹ Tyrrell, The point at issue, in *Hibbert Journal*, "Jesus or Christ," 8.

² Denney, *op. cit.* 389.

valuable part of what it contains, and that which has the least prospect of permanence.”¹ It is the new parts, representing the gains of the Reformation revival, that are alone considered valuable and permanent. But if Creed and Confession are to be contrasted or compared, history must be allowed some voice as to their respective permanence and value, and surely in such cases history gives no uncertain verdict.

Does history give the least countenance to the idea that the Confession has been or could be the means of uniting Christians sundered by the Creed? On the contrary, while Confessions have deliberately divided true Christian men into hostile camps, the Creed drove from the Church those whom every historian and philosopher recognizes to have been Christian only in name. The Confession, with its endless and elaborate explanations, forms a strange contrast to the simple statements of the Creed with its single doctrinal definition, designed to make needless or harmful explanations impossible.

For the Creed differs from the Confession most of all in this—that it refuses to give explanations, and that this refusal constitutes the strongest safeguard for the liberty of Christian thought. It is not from any want of interest either in intellectual freedom or in the redemptive and regenerative work of Son and Spirit among the souls of men, that the Creed shrinks from elaborate definition of the work of Christ on our behalf. It is content to say that it was for us men and for our salvation that He came down from heaven and that He suffered. The scheme of salva-

¹ Denney, *op. cit.* 392.

tion propounded by the Creed is a religion of redemption—but the manner and method of that redemption is left undefined and unexplained, in order that each Christian may be free in the light of his own experience to explain as far as explanation is desired.

It is just because the Creed recognizes the sufficiency of Scriptural statement, and that single interpretation of Scripture which was found necessary to secure the supremacy of Scripture, that the Creed is lifted above local or temporary controversies, and is fitted (as has been found) for a common basis of belief in which all Christians may unite.

There remains, however, the further question—Is not the work of Christ a more religious, and a more recognizable basis of union, than any doctrine concerning His person? Must we not first see what He does, then in the light of what He does, proceed to consider who He is? Is not this the true order, to interpret Christ's person by His work, rather than to interpret His work by any preconceived doctrine as to His person? If so, would it not be well to concentrate attention on the religious significance of His life and death rather than to demand adherence to an intellectual conception of His Being?

But does not this form of putting the question, succeed in rather begging the question? Of course, the early Church came from the consideration of what Christ had done to the consciousness of what He was. The Apostles and the earliest believers undoubtedly interpreted His person by His work. But this result having once been reached, is no use to be made of it? Is the grain to be gathered but

never garnered? At a time when each convert to Christianity was compelled to recapitulate in his own experience of conversion that which had brought the first believers to full faith in Christ, it was needful and natural that the work of Christ should continue to be emphasized as the clue to His divine personality. But what of the time when people were born, and not made Christians (save in baptism)? Was the experience of disciples, who formed the basis and the background of the Christian consciousness, to count for naught? Was it not right that from the first Christ's little ones (children in age, or in attainment) should know who He was, that they might the more easily learn what great things He had wrought for their souls? Of what kind of avail is any knowledge that cannot be inherited and handed on to others? Of what value is experience of which no further use can ever be made? The Church's knowledge and experience of Christ her living Lord is as one of those harvest fields whereat others have laboured that a new generation might enter into the fruits thereof. It is one of those great and golden gains that are available for all mankind. The course of this world is now so ordered that many may never find the Lord in the crises of conversion, or in the exceptional emergencies and excitements of religious revival. Rather they have Him always at their side, and as they grow in years, they grow also in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, they begin with Christ not as they, but as the Church has found Him ; and believing Him to be the Son of God, and, because He is the Son of God, to be also the Saviour

of their souls, they grow gradually into the personal appropriation of His promised blessings and the individual realization of the greatness and grandeur of His person. What we know Christ has done for us and in us, is ultimately the measure of what Christ is to us : but perhaps we should never have attained to so full a knowledge and experience of what He had done for our souls had we not begun with an inherited belief in His perfectness and power. What we know that He has done for us, is finally decisive : but what we believe He has done for others, may be no small help in beginning to bring us to that completer and more consciously personal belief. In this way it is inevitable that the Church having, from what He did, discovered what He is, should declare to us what He is, that we might appreciate the goodness and divineness of what He has also done.

(3) It is recognized that the responsibilities of a society are greater than those of its individual members. The Church is bound to be conservative, and in the matter of the Creeds there is "a just and proper jealousy of an attitude towards the past which virtually denies to it the presence and the providence of God and assumes that where it is concerned, we have everything to teach and nothing to learn."¹

The contrast to this arrogant and uncritical attitude is to be found in the careful position adopted by Dr. Sanday. "In the last resort, the key to the position is that there is a God in heaven who really shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will. I believe that in His hands is the whole course of

¹ Denney, *op. cit.* 388.

human history and especially the history of those who deliberately seek His guidance. I therefore trace His guidance in the ultimate decisions, the fundamental decisions of the Church of the Fathers, and it is to me incredible that He should intend the course of modern development to issue in direct opposition to them.”¹

This must not be taken as denying the fullest freedom to the human intelligence: for when once we have consented to keep company with criticism, we must go *ὅπου ὁ λόγος ἄγει*. I am not sure that Dr. Sanday is right about the speed with which he at once starts to retrace his steps when he finds that his own views are in the way to conflict with those of the ancient Church. For is present progress possible if we are pledged from the beginning to conformity with the past? Has this been the method of any scientific discovery? In such spheres, have not the conclusions of the past been subjected to continual examination and investigation, until the things which seemed most securely settled have been most rudely shaken, and convictions the most widely cherished have been shown to rest upon the flimsiest foundations?

Yet while it is possible to exaggerate the value of the past for the present, it is impossible to contemplate anything even corresponding to a complete break with the past which has brought the present to the birth. If Dr. Sanday means no more than that these past decisions are an element, and a most important one, which must be taken into serious account before finally formulating or propounding

¹ Sanday, *Christologies Ancient and Modern*, Preface, vi-vii.

new decisions or discoveries, we are in the most hearty agreement with his wise restraint. But we must remember that in other realms of thought men have witnessed not merely readjustments but revolutions, and that freedom has ever been the condition of advance. The remembrance of these things will not, however, lead us to forget that if the hand that has grasped ourselves is strong, the same hand has ever guided the Church, and it is sure.

If the Creeds were philosophical decisions with the object of foreclosing discussion, their retention, save as venerable symbols of antiquity, would be simply to court calamity. I can imagine that they should be used for such a purpose. They have in fact been thus used. They are so used by certain men to-day. But I can conceive no greater disservice done to the Creeds themselves than that they should be taken as the watchwords of a reactionary or obscurantist party. If ever the retention of the Creeds should cause them to be considered (as perhaps a certain party would desire them to be considered) as symbols of repression, then all who care for liberty of conscience, and for free inquiry would be driven, however great their reluctance, however terrible the wrench, to join hands with those who battling for progress would declare that the cry of The Creeds of the Church, The Creeds of the Church, might become as false and irreligious as the watchword of those who would say nothing but, The Temple of the Lord, The Temple of the Lord, and so saying, went nigh to bringing Israel's religion to calamitous collapse. If, on the other hand, the Creeds are simple statements of the faith and ex-

perience which the common Christian's consciousness has recognized as essential elements of the Gospel message, we may be glad and grateful to march forward and to fight under the Church's flag.

The Creeds, in fact, express not so much what we believe, as what we wish to believe. What we wish to believe—for we recognize the feebleness of our own faith, and in our struggles the Church is our standard-bearer. The Creed is an ideal, an inspiration; it gives protection and power to individual faith.

The use of the Creed in public worship makes this meaning of it the more marked. It is the Creed of the Church Catholic, not the confession of any particular individual.

In hoc signo vinces. The Church knows that she has been created and called to the work of witness. She must know also to what it is that her witness must be given. She thus flings forth her banner of faith and treats with tenderness the timidities and uncertainties of individual belief which she suffers to seek the shadow of her victorious sign and standard.

"What holds the Church together," writes one of the most candid and convincing members of the Ritschlian school, "and binds its members one to another, is, before all else, its faith—and this is the common faith. This common faith must form the basis of the Church's preaching and of her instruction of the youth. There is no Christian Church which has not such a rule, none also in which this rule does not present itself in teaching. And this teaching is the Church's dogma."¹ We may, indeed, be truly

¹ Kaftan, *Glaube und Dogma*, 26.

grateful for this witness on the part of a leading professor of a Protestant Communion and non-confessional school to the need and value of dogmatic teaching—which for us is both interpreted and limited by the Creeds of the Catholic Church.

It is idle to lay foundations, however firm, if no house is to be built thereon. It may be conceded that for centuries the richness and exceeding magnificence of our inheritance remained practically unknown if not undiscovered. The great and glorious promises of God, and His mighty work for sinful souls were as a closed book to the mass of men till redemption was rediscovered at the Reformation. Till that time many were so entirely pre-occupied with inspecting the foundations, so exclusively concerned with scholastic subtilties and transcendental theories concerning the Person of Christ, that they knew next to nothing of that revealing and redeeming work of God in Christ, nothing of that holy habitation of God in the Spirit wherein the souls of men might find shelter from the stormy blast. But there is a folly yet more frantic and more fatal than the exclusive preoccupation with foundations, which forgets to dwell in the house that has been built thereon—the folly of those that, dwelling in the house, despise the foundations of the same. Let us rejoice in the richness of our possession, the sureness and stateliness, the variety and unmeasured magnificence of the work of grace wherein and whereby we live—but the greater our appreciation of these things as priceless and peculiar treasures, the more tenaciously

shall we defend those firm foundations of the faith in a historical and heavenly Christ whereon the whole edifice of Christian experience is ultimately based. For the castle of faith being built in the air shall vanish before our eyes, and being built upon the sand it shall be swept away : but being founded on the rock it shall endure—and that rock is Jesus, confessed as Christ, the Son of God.

This then is the first and firmest of all foundations, upon which and into which all else is built—Christ's Divinity confessed by men and before men. For other foundation can no man lay than that which hath been laid, even Jesus Christ. To the need for the asserting and assuring of that supreme article of our faith, both the second and the twentieth centuries bear equal and emphatic witness.

I could not for a moment suppose that the things which I have tried to say, could be of any independent value here in the centre of our Church's and our country's intellectual and religious life. Yet I am glad to have stood here and to have said that which I have said. For I fancy there must be many whose experience of religious truth cannot have been much different from my own.

It was from pious parents that first we learned how great and good was Jesus, Son of God and Shepherd of our Souls. Taught the open secret of His person, we could understand something of the greatness and goodness of the work He came on earth to do.

Then came the time of sombre shadows, when sin

struck the sunshine out of boyhood's life. What could be done in such season of stress, save to turn to Him whose goodness we had never once consciously experienced, yet never once consciously doubted ; and to make trial of a love which we had always acknowledged yet never felt. Thus turning and thus trying, we found in Him pity and plenteous redemption. Experience did decide. We learned the reality of reconciliation. We knew that God was in Christ, and that those who take Him at His word shall yet give Him thanks that is the Saviour of all sinners who put their trust in Him.

We sat by the wayside of life, blind and begging. We had heard of Him that this man openeth the eyes of the blind. Just because we believed this report, we determined to make the grand adventure. So when He passed by we cried out and we found the truth of all that had been told us. "This one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." But my personal witness passes into the chorus of the Church's praise. As far as it has any worth, it strengthens and supports the Creed which caused me to turn to Him. It cannot supplant the Creed, for it is proved true. It cannot supplement the Creed, for it is found sufficient. All I can do is to add my testimony to its truth, my support to its sufficiency, that others believing first because of my word may believe because of the Church's word ; and believing in the Church's word may believe no longer because of her saying, but because, having heard Him themselves, they know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

Thus was God in Christ—reconciling and re-

deeming—made real to me, but not for one moment did the realization of that conscious grasp of God throw the least doubt on the reality of the unreflective faith of earlier years whereby the path was pointed out when in trouble or temptation He called me to come closer.

But I would not generalize from a single or subjective experience. Coming among you not from the scholar's study, but from the streets and slums, the sorrows and the sins of Southwark, I know the folly and futility of proclaiming a doubtful message or preaching a divided Christ. Here is our one hope: so to combine the historical and the heavenly that the image of His person and the impress of His power may be stamped into the souls of the men whom He has redeemed with His most precious blood. We must appeal both to the imagination and to the intelligence, content to leave it with the Lord along which way He will come to make the crooked straight and the rough places smooth. A hesitating or half-hearted Gospel will win no acceptance, and exercise no attractive or constraining power. We must tell the people whom we have found Christ to be, whom the Church knows Him to be, and worships Him as being. Under the cover of the Church's Creed, their feeble faith may come to flower and fruit: but without such support and strength it may rapidly wither in the fierce glare of public persecution.

We speak with shame of a divided Christendom. Let us also be sure of this—that the divisions of Christendom will not be healed by a divided Christ.

Christ that is true God and true man, Christ the Lord and Christ the Word, both sides are equally necessary if we would present Jesus to men as the mediator of a perfect revelation and of a perfect redemption. To surrender the Creeds as intellectual encumbrances would, in my humble opinion, be altogether unscientific and uncritical: to disparage them as practically valueless seems an entire misunderstanding of the actual situation. It is precisely those who learn most thoroughly to believe that He is the Son of God who look most truly to Him to be the Saviour of their souls.

For those who work, for those for whom we work, a Christ is necessary, being such a one as He to whom we can sing (as the first Christians sang) hymns as to God, and one, no less, who, being man, can sympathize with struggle, and can share the pains and pangs of His tried and troubled servants—Perfect God and Perfect Man.

O, human heart, if thou canst so
Set up a mark of everlasting right,
Above the senses' howling ebb and flow
To cheer thee, and to right thee, if thou roam,
Not with lost toil thou labourest through the night;
Thou makest the heaven thou hopest, indeed thy home.

He that speaks knows that his words are the words of one that stands as it were but on the threshold, conscious that God calls him forward, and content to follow, though without fear. For though, like the Father of the faithful, we know not whither we are going—therein lies our very joy, for we are confident that He which is our God, shall be our guide unto death.

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Meanwhile, I rejoice that experience has confirmed earlier faith : I rejoice to bear witness to the power of the Church's Creed : I rejoice that I can repeat with heart and mouth that grand confession of the divinity of our Saviour.

And I believe in *One* Lord, Jesus Christ,
God of God,
Light of Light,
Very God of Very God,
Being of one Substance with the Father,
Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven.
. . . And was crucified also
For us.

The very God ! Think ! Dost thou think ?
So the All Great were the All Loving too,
So through the thunder comes a human voice,
Saying—O heart I made, a heart beats here ;
Face my hands fashioned, see it in myself,
Thou hast no power nor mayest conceive of mine,
But love I gave thee, with myself to love.

Thus I worship and adore Him who, for our salvation, was slain, and lo ! He is alive for evermore, willing yet to follow whithersoever He leadeth, but never willing to suspend the song which swells before the throne of God and of the Lamb.

Behold the Lamb of God,
Worthy is He alone
To sit upon the throne
Of God above :
One with the Ancient of all Days,
One with the Comforter in praise,
All Light and Love.

